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THE MINISTRY
OF CATECHISING.

BY

MONSEIGNEUR DUPANLOUP,

BISHOP OF ORLÉANS,

MEMBER OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY.

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH.

WITH A PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR.

LONDON

GRIFFITH FARRAN & CO.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

Readers of the life of Bishop Dupanloup will hardly need to be reminded of the extreme importance which he attached to the religious education of children by means of Catechising, calling it "L'Œuvre par excellence," and considering it to be the highest part of his ministry.

His famous work on the subject is known to many of the English Clergy, but if it were more widely known, it seems impossible to doubt that its study would cause a complete revolution in the minds of many as to the mode of conducting the religious education of children, and even as to the object to be kept in view.

And in these days, when the earnest-minded of our Clergy are so anxiously seeking how to influence the young permanently, I feel sure that an English Version will be welcome, for many of them have not the time to attack a closely-written French book.

It is true that there are a few practices and views set forth which are distinctively Roman; and others, again, which are distinctively French; but a translation, to be of any value, must be complete, and I have therefore made no attempt to eliminate them; they are quite obvious wherever they occur, and need not be pointed out to an educated class of readers.

I trust that no faultiness of translation will wholly mar the exceeding interest of the original.

The Translator.

Christmas, 1899.

TO THE YOUNG CLERGY OF MY DIOCESE.

To you, the young priests of the diocese of Orléans, I wish to dedicate this book; you, whom I have myself brought up and ordained to the Priesthood.

Not that I forget your elders in the Priesthood! Successors of those who, after the days of the great tribulation, restored the Faith in our Churches, these venerable priests have carried on this laborious work, and still carry it on with unwearied self-denial and devotion; let us never forget what they have done, and all that we owe to them!

They were already engaged in the work when we came to it; I had not the honour of guiding their first steps in their catechistic and pastoral career; and therefore (though still I am always addressing them as well, and reflecting back to them the rays of light they have given me on this work, about which I have so often consulted them), it is chiefly to you that I offer it, you on whom, on the day of ordination, I laid hands, and whose zeal I have endeavoured to direct according to the holy traditions I myself inherited.

The Catechism, gentlemen, is our great duty, and for my own part, it has always been my sweetest and dearest labour, and since I have been amongst you, it has been my chief and most constant care.

Three years ago, as you know, I was able to publish the diocesan Catechism, on which I had worked for a long time; I venture to say nothing has been neglected which would help to make a book of the kind such as it should be, a popular manual, a sure and exact *résumé* of Christian doctrine, a clear, precise, solid work, easy to understand and easy to learn.

At the Grand-Séminaire, some years before, I had already given *Conférences* on the Catechism, which are perhaps not altogether forgotten by the clergy of Orléans; these *Conférences* grew into an

enlarged pastoral Instruction, which I have since addressed to all the clergy of the diocese, and in this I announced a still larger work, in which I should treat exhaustively on this important subject. It is this book which I now have the comfort of offering to you.

I am not giving you mere theories and systems, but something which is actually practised ; and multiplied experiences, very often supplied by yourselves, but my own as well. You do the work of the Catechism, gentlemen, with an intelligence and zeal for which I know not how to be thankful enough to God ; I have, as you know, followed closely all your labours, and that not only by official reports, but by a diligent and personal correspondence with you ; and it has rejoiced me to tell of your efforts, your inventions, your pastoral works, your success. I myself have long been engaged in the work ; all my life I have either been doing the work of the Catechism, or others have been doing it under my direction. Well, all this collected practice and experiences will be found brought out in the *Discourses* which form this volume.

And I think I may dedicate these Discourses, not only to you, but also to all the young clergy in France, who are specially engaged in the work of the Catechism.

Notwithstanding the ardent zeal which is so delightful to see in the heart of young priests, the Catechisms, though admirably worked in so many parishes, are, it must be owned, not equally so everywhere, no doubt from want of experience and practical knowledge. On this subject there is much useful instruction to be given, and possibly revelations to be made concerning this ministry, which though apparently so humble, is really so delicate and complex. According to the manner in which it is fulfilled, it may only leave passing impressions on the souls of the children, or it may work in them such great good, it may penetrate them so deeply, that nothing can surpass its effect and power. And since by God's Providence I was, while yet young, placed at the fountain-head of the best catechetical traditions of the Church of France ; since I have reaped the benefit of this myself, and have striven to hand it on to others ; since, finally, to all these personal experiences the long years of my Episcopate have enabled me to add the experience of the most zealous priests of this large diocese, it is perhaps my duty to tell my

younger brethren in the priesthood what I have seen, taught, and practised; a duty and also a delight to show them, and to put into their hands, all this experience of the science of catechising.

Therefore, catechists of the Church of France, I dedicate these Discourses also to you (your holy Bishops will kindly allow me), whoever you may be, and in whatever parish, in town or country, this great ministry is confided to you.

It is my profound conviction that the world would be saved if we devoted ourselves to youth. And in no way can we devote ourselves with more pleasure and with more fruit than by means of the Catechisms, even those which are most humble and unpretending.

Oh, then, all you young priests, you whom our Lord calls, not His servants, but His friends, you who are also the true friends of that childhood which was so dear to Him, set yourselves more than ever to the work! May these pages, written with a sincere love of the Church and of souls, help in some measure to make you love the Catechisms! May the fire of zeal be kindled yet more brightly in all your hearts for this blessed ministry! The time is come, a supreme effort must be made to save souls, and above all to save childhood, which is the whole future! Everything must be done to draw the children to the Catechisms, and to keep there, as long as possible, under the wings of religion, this last hope of the flock of Jesus Christ: "*Spem Gregis.*"

Ah! I will venture to say, if in our country, which is still so Christian, in spite of so many efforts of impiety—if the Catechisms were everywhere carried out as they might be, if they were made attractive, if the sweet and penetrating influence of the Holy Word were there, and zeal with all its ardour, the good that would result from them would be incalculable.

Then, gentlemen, and my very dear fellow-workers, love this sweet ministry; study it, know the holy art thoroughly, for there is an art, a simple and divine art, and a deep science of catechising; above all, put into it all your heart and soul, and nothing in your life will be more blest by God.

Oh, the beloved ministry of childhood! Oh, the lovable and precious souls of little children! I have greatly loved them, I shall love them always. It was at the Catechisms that I learned to know

the beauty of souls, and the simple fresh beauty of children's souls surpasses all. It was there that I saw them, with that inexpressible charm with which innocence and the grace of God adorns those early years; it was there that a humble and obscure service met with such trusting teachableness, such lively gratitude, in thousands of young hearts, and such constant fidelity, which yet endures.

And thus my ministry with the dear souls of these children is my sweetest recollection on earth; and nothing will ever be to me equal to the happiness of having been the Friend, the Teacher, and the Apostle of childhood! I would be so still, and even to the end I shall joyfully repeat, "*Pascam vos et Parvulos vestros.*"

✠ Félix, Bishop of Orléans.

Orléans, November 21, 1868.
Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin.

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BOOK I.—THE PRINCIPLES.

THE MINISTRY OF CATECHISING.

FIRST DISCOURSE.

THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION.

What is a Catechism?
What is a Catechist?
What is meant by doing the work of the Catechism?

At first sight, gentlemen, these questions may perhaps appear to you strange, or at least superfluous; for it would seem, in fact, that every one knows what a Catechist is, every one knows what is meant by doing this work of the Catechism.

But, gentlemen, for my part, I am not so sure; I believe that on this subject all is not known which should be known; and on the other hand, I believe these questions to be most important, in fact, fundamental.

I.

To do the work of the Catechism,—is it simply, as it is generally defined, to teach the elements of Christian doctrine to children? This definition is exact, but it is not complete. It tells something, a part, an important part of the great work of which we are speaking; but it does not tell all. The work of the Catechism is much more.

Understood and practised as it ought to be, the Catechism is not only INSTRUCTION, it is EDUCATION; the religious EDUCATION of the man, during the years of his childhood, and even of his youth.

EDUCATION and INSTRUCTION, you are aware, gentlemen, are two very distinct things.

EDUCATION is the end to be attained, the very work to be accomplished; INSTRUCTION is only one of the means.

INSTRUCTION provides the mind with the knowledge of certain things; EDUCATION lifts up the whole soul. INSTRUCTION addresses itself directly only to the understanding; EDUCATION forms at the same time the understanding, the heart, the character, and the conscience.

Religious EDUCATION certainly cannot do without religious INSTRUCTION; but it is most important quite to understand, that one is not the other. To give religious instruction to the mind without at the same time attending to the religious education of the heart, the character, and the conscience, would be to fall very far short of the end to be attained, very much below the nature of the work we are hoping to describe and show the importance of.

To do the work of the Catechism, then, is not only to teach children Christianity; it is to educate them in Christianity. Grand words! What is their meaning? It means to educate them in innocence and Christian wisdom, in the light and grace of evangelical virtues; it means to educate them in the fear and love of God, it means to prepare them for eternal life, by elevating and sanctifying the present life.

To educate in Christianity,—this, then, is our motto; it expresses what is the very ground and foundation of the Catechism, the essential thing to be done. To accept or refuse this motto, is to say YES or NO to the work itself.

In fact, gentlemen, is it not evident that to confine oneself to instructing children in the elements of Christian doctrine, without taking the trouble to make them relish it and practise it, without forming in them Christian habits and tastes and manners, is to do scarcely anything towards the end to be attained, scarcely anything for virtue and happiness in the

present life, and absolutely nothing for the winning of life eternal.

What is here wanted, above everything, "*in fine et ante omnia*," as once the Prince of the Apostles said, is to win their souls to God, and for that, the important, the indispensable thing is to form and elevate their will as well as their understanding in the region of Divine things, by laying in the depth of their heart, together with the light of faith, the love of God and the hope of eternal life. No doubt the minds of children may be greatly elevated by the teaching of Christian doctrine, but if we would not miserably spoil our work, their hearts must at the same time be lifted up by the love of this heavenly doctrine, and by the virtues which it inspires.

To enlighten them on their duties is most important, no one disputes it; but of what use will this enlightenment be, if they are not also made to love their duties, and feel the happiness of performing them? Therefore the teaching we give them, if it only instructs them, is not enough; we must add to it exhortations which touch them, examples which persuade them, practices which please them, pious exercises which make them better. We must improve their character, correct their faults, strengthen their will, enlighten and rectify their conscience, ennoble their sentiments; in a word, we must lift their whole soul up, even to God.

You see, gentlemen, the teaching of Religion, all-important as it is, is only one part of this excellent work. In one word, which sums up everything, and is on this point the very formula of Catholic Science—the Catechism is not simply INSTRUCTION, it is EDUCATION; it is not only to *teach* Christianity to the children, it is to *educate* the children in Christianity. The simple enunciation of the terms throws a light which cannot be lost on such clear-sighted minds as your own.

II

Moreover, this formula is well known in the educational world; it has been very often employed in France for the last thirty years, specially during the great contests for the "liberty of teaching." Volumes were then written to show that instruction is not everything; and that education is a much higher thing than instruction.

And in order to understand well, gentlemen, how this is specially true in regard to the Catechism, will you notice the expressions which are used about it, and which we have ourselves used? Common language sometimes, as you know, hides under an apparent simplicity deep meanings into which it is important to penetrate.

We have said, "the work of the Catechism," because in fact it is not a question of mere words, not a dry instruction, the *Letter* of a book recited, and even explained; no, it is a *Work*, a great work; it is an action, a strong and necessary action, upon souls.

Again, have you remarked, gentlemen, this other expression, which is universally used, even when not sufficiently understood: To do the work of the Catechism (*Faire le Catéchisme*)? This is evidently much more than to explain the letter of it: it is to teach the children to love it, to practise it; it is to put it into the heart at the same time as into the mind; it is to make it pass from theoretical teaching into real life; and as far as is possible at this tender age, on which all the other ages of life depend, it is to form and settle the *man* firmly in Christian manners and habits. Thus one may say, there are three steps in the work of the Catechism: there is the Catechism *recited*, the Catechism *explained*, and then the Catechism *practised*. The recitation without explanation is nothing, you all feel that: what would you think of a Catechist who confined himself to having the letter of the Catechism recited without ever explaining it? But the recitation and explanation without the practice is little better, for it is the practice of the Catechism which alone saves souls; it is the practice of the

Catechism which alone makes Christians, which forms Christian minds and hearts, and wins to their Creator and their God these souls whom Jesus Christ has bought with His blood.

But, gentlemen, if to *explain* the Catechism, and to *do the work of the* Catechism are two distinct things, it must be added that these two things never ought to be separated. Unhappily, it very often happens that one goes without the other. How many priests there are to whom one could say, "You do not do the work of the Catechism, you do not understand that it consists, not in a simple religious teaching, not in a more or less clear explanation of the doctrine; but that it is an effective work, a great work, the most important of all priestly works, that which S. Paul calls '*opus ministerii, opus Christi*'; that which he defines admirably in these words: '*Filuoli, quos iterum parturio, donec formetur Christus in vobis.*'"

It is, according to the energetic expression of the Apostle, a giving birth to souls, it is forming Jesus Christ in souls; and you, you content yourselves with talking of, with discussing, with teaching, with having a class of religion; you give an instruction, more or less dry, to the mind; you do not labour for the formation, for the religious education of the soul! Then, after having thus fatigued and wearied these children for several months, and have fatigued and wearied yourselves with it, you are surprised to see them fly far from you the day after a first Communion!

And often, I am bound to say, it is not from want of zeal, it is from want of reflection; for there are some who have sufficient zeal to make them go through this melancholy Catechism every day; the less zealous constrain themselves to do it three times a week.

I repeat then this word, "*want of reflection,*" and let no one be offended, for you may have much zeal and much mind, and yet not have reflected deeply enough on some things.

With sincerity and with joy, gentlemen, can I declare that the diocese of Orléans is one of the dioceses of France where the work of the Catechism is best done. It is a homage which I am as pleased to render to you, as you may be proud to receive it.

But yet the truth is, that a great number of priests in our towns and in our villages often fall into the same fault with which, not long ago, we ourselves so strongly reproached the University professors, with which indeed the most eminent men of the University were the first to reproach them: "You instruct, you do not educate," said M. Saint-Marc Girardin; "you cultivate and develop the mind, but not the heart." Well! now too there are priests of whom one can say: they instruct, they do not educate. They give instruction, more or less dry, and for that very reason more or less barren, but they have no thought of making it be enjoyed, making it be loved.

And yet, if even the secular teaching of youth is only really serious and complete, when to the *instruction* which enlightens the mind is joined the *education* which forms the heart, the character, the conscience, the will, and by that means develops, strengthens, and educates all the faculties of the soul; if, in the teaching of sciences and human literature, no one ought to confine himself to *instructing*, but should apply himself also and above all to *educating*; how much more, in the teaching of Religion, is it of all things necessary that to this *instruction of the mind*, which enlightens and makes duties to be known, should be joined the *education of the heart*, which makes them to be loved, and which, by inspiring good inclinations and holy habits, forms the whole soul in Christian virtues, and educates it religiously?

In vain you may answer, as certain University professors answered us, that instruction contributes to good *education*. That is evident, and I am far from denying it; but it is no less evident that instruction is not everything, and that it cannot be the only and sufficient way. The most solid instruction, confined to itself, will always be cold, dry, and often unfruitful. I cannot weary of saying to you again that examples, exhortations, and above all, practices, must be added to it, otherwise there will be very little result. You are perhaps the most learned priest in the diocese, the one who gives an instruction the best; so much the better, for by that means you can make the children know the foundations of Religion.

Thanks to you, such a child can know and understand perfectly the whole letter of his Catechism, and all the essential part, all the substance of Christian theology; but with all this, this little theologian may be only a child without heart, without soul, without piety, without true religion, if the zeal and anxiety of his Catechist has not known how to inspire in him a lively faith, the love of the good God, the delight in, the practice of, and the zeal for Christian virtues.

Although, gentlemen, you may more or less disregard these feelings and thoughts, it is impossible not to recognize the truth of them. It is needless then longer to insist upon it, you understand me. I conclude by repeating my formula, "The Catechism is not mere *Instruction*, it is *the Christian education of the soul.*"

And is it not thus that the primitive Church understood it and practised it, and (for the Church does not change) that all Pastors really worthy of the name have practised it since? What was the object, in the first ages of Christianity, of what were called the *Catecheses?* It was, no doubt, to *instruct*, but was it not also and chiefly to *educate*, and to form in the Christian life?

"He who was judged capable of becoming a Christian," says Fleury, "was made a Catechumen. He attended the public sermons, to which even unbelievers were admitted; but besides, there were Catechists who *watched over the conduct* of the Catechumens, and taught them separately the elements of the faith. They were *chiefly instructed in the rules of morality*, in order that they might know how they ought to live after their baptism.

"They not only were careful to see that the Catechumen *learned the doctrine*, but THAT HE CORRECTED HIS MANNERS; and he was left in this condition, that is to say, without baptism, till he was wholly converted."

The Church could change its discipline, and settle that in future little infants should be baptized immediately after their birth; but its spirit could not change; and when the children of our days, *Catechumens again* (no longer of Baptism, but of the Eucharist), come to be taught by us before being admitted

for the first time to the Holy Table, the Church does not mean that we shall confine ourselves to instructing them; she desires that we shall watch over their conduct, that we shall *teach them how they ought to live* in the midst of the world, and how to persevere in goodness after the first Communion: and with that view she desires that we teach them to love God, to pray, to reflect on the things that belong to salvation, to repent of their sins, to correct their bad habits, to ask pardon of God, to make acts of contrition and of steadfast resolve,—such as are not only in their books or on their lips, but in their heart;—she desires that we should so teach them, that their conduct shall become holy and pure, and finally that we should not let them go out of our hands and from our Catechisms, till they are entirely converted and settled, in a word, not till, as far as in us lies, we have achieved and finished their Christian education.

And the Church desires also, gentlemen, that you should know that so far as you have not done this, you have done nothing; no, the giving birth to these young souls, which is the most glorious fruit which your priesthood can produce, is not done, is not finished, till Jesus Christ is formed in them. *Donec formetur Christus in vobis.*

III.

It must be well understood then, that the *Catechism* is not a simple class, a sort of school, where religion is taught to children, or where their mind is more or less instructed; Holy Scripture gives us quite other ideas of it; the *Catechism* is a Family where souls are educated for God, for the Church, and for Heaven; it is a Sanctuary, a sacred asylum where they are made to love Religion; it is a Fold where the youngest lambs of the flock are gathered, to be nourished and made to grow under the eyes of the Lord, and where, to that end, they are given food and all the care which the feebleness of their age requires.

What above all must be understood is, that the *Catechist*

is not merely a professor of religion and of morals, who instructs his scholars more or less well; he is not, as S. Paul has said before, a *schoolmaster;* he is a Shepherd, he is a Father, *non Pædagogos, sed Patres.* Those who are confided to him are not common scholars, but the children of God, the children of the Holy Church, the sheep of the Divine Shepherd, redeemed by His Cross.

And do not think that I am exaggerating anything here; I shall succeed, I am sure, in showing it to you with the utmost clearness of Gospel light; and I affirm with persistence, and with the certainty of not meeting with a possible contradiction, that the Christian Catechist, really worthy of this great name, is a holy minister, invested with an august character, that he may accomplish the most beautiful of works in young souls; he is a Shepherd who knows the most dear sheep of the flock of Jesus Christ; who calls them by their names, who goes before them, and anxiously leads them into the pastures of eternal life; *ante eas vadit;* he is a Father who loves his children with tenderness; he is a Mother whose pleasure it is to nourish them; fully justifying the beautiful words of Fénélon, "*Be fathers; but that is not enough, be mothers!*"

And what did Fénélon, but appropriate to himself the language of S. Paul, of that Apostle who was so strong and tender of soul, saying to those whom he had taught: "*Facti sumus in medio vestrûm, tanquam si nutrix foveat filios suos.*"

Or when at another time he said: "*Consolantes vos et deprecantes, sicut pater filios suos.*"

And the beloved disciple, S. John the Evangelist, were not his feelings, was not his heart the same, when he exclaimed: "*Majorem non habeo gratiam, quàm ut audiam filios meos in veritate ambulare*"?

These beautiful and strong expressions of apostolic zeal bring me on to *the* word, without which nothing that I have spoken of can be practised, or even understood; and this word, which is by itself the great secret of the work which I am trying to lay before you, is this:

In order that the Catechist may be both Pastor and Father, there is, as for all fatherhood, one indispensable condition, love. Yes, love; a great love of God and of souls. It is necessary above all things that the Catechist shall love his children, and God in his children; that he himself shall be loved by them, and that he shall make them love God; that he shall teach them to pray and to adore their Creator, to repent of those sins which offend Him, and to cure themselves of the faults which are spoiling their souls. So long as you have not taught them to love their Father Who is in heaven; so long as you have not taught them to love the Church which is the mother of all the faithful, and that holy House which is also called the Church, and which is the House of God for them, in their parish—so long as you have not taught them to love the Church and Heaven,—and, I add, to love you yourselves, yes, yourselves! for it is necessary that they love you, otherwise you will never succeed with them in anything; so long as you do not make them feel that you yourselves love them, that you are their pastor and their father, you have done nothing.

Yes, gentlemen, though you may have taught and explained, with the knowledge and clearness of the most skilful professor, all the letter of the Catechism to these poor children; if they do not love you, if they do not love this Catechism which you teach them, if they do not love God, if they do not love the Holy Virgin, the Saints, the Angels, and everything which is Religion in their eyes; if the day after you have finished teaching them the Catechism they fly from you; if, the first Communion once made, they never wish to see you again, if you never find them again!—(alas! you know it, that is just how it is with you, specially as to the boys; it is just this which you so often groan over)—no, once again, you have done nothing; in vain you have explained to them the Catechism and given them instructions, you have not even instructed them; for be assured they will not have solid instruction of the mind, if education of the soul is not given them; if you seek to instruct them without at the same time seeking to educate their heart, they get no profit from this dry,

barren, and lifeless instruction, they lose it directly they have received it.

In a word, if you have not known how to find the secret of penetrating even to their heart; if you have never felt yourselves, nor known how to excite in them, those thrilling emotions of the soul which are produced by the love of God and by zeal; if you do not say as S. John, or as S. Paul, "*Filioli, quos diligo in veritate, filioli, quos iterùm parturio,*" there is *that* wanting, both in you and for them, which alone insures the divine fruit of pastoral teaching.

And what I say here, gentlemen, mark it well, is to be seen both in Nature and in Grace. Yes, it is necessary that the Shepherd love his flock, it is necessary that the Catechist love his children, and that the children love their Catechist; otherwise he will not even be able to instruct them in a real and effective manner.

Instruction will always be without charm, if he who gives it does not love those who receive it, and if those who receive it do not love him who gives it.

Here then, gentlemen, is the great secret for making the Catechism really the education of souls; there is no other. The Catechists must love God in their children, and they must make them feel it. And then the children will love their Catechists, and God in their Catechists, and He will Himself work wonders in these young souls.

But, you will perhaps ask me *how* to make them feel this? Ah! gentlemen, this is something which cannot be defined. I can only tell you simply this, that when I was a Catechist I made it to be felt. How? I know not. But we felt it ourselves, we loved these young souls for God's sake, we tried to love God in them; and God deigned to bless this devotion of our heart.

But it is not a question of myself here. One word of S. Augustine says it all, and with sovereign authority: "*Ama, et fac quod vis.*" Love, love! and all which you believe impossible will be easy to you. S. Augustine says again: "*Da amantem, et sentit quod dico.*" In the work of souls, the heart and love are the spirit and the life: "*Spiritus et vita. Da amantem,*

da sitientem, da esurientem;" love the precious souls of these children! be hungry and thirsty for their happiness, for their eternal beauty, for their salvation. Then you will understand all things, and you will make all things to be understood; for it is the Divine Unction, which is Love, which teaches everything: "*Unctio docet omnia.*"

Amantem! sitientem! esurientem! This craving hunger, this ardent thirst of your hearts will infallibly excite in the bright souls of these children a hunger and a thirst for heavenly things, and then you will see a beautiful sight.

Have you ever reflected, gentlemen, on those beautiful words of the Saviour, which speak most specially to Catechists, and which our Lord did not utter in vain: "*Quicumque potum dederit uni ex minimis istis calicem aquæ . . . amen dico vobis, non perdet mercedem suam?*" Just this is done in the Catechism.

In thinking of bringing these words under your notice, I have meditated much on them,—look at them closely, that you may see all the charm they have for a Catechist.

Here are these little children, *minimis istis*, these lambs of the sheepfold, these new-born ones of the family, and you give them to drink this water which springs up even to eternal life, you bring to their lips this beverage, which is the first want of their souls.

These souls are young plants, tender flowers, often beaten down to earth by killing blasts, and withered before their time. Well, to revive them, to lift their heads again towards Heaven, you, in the Catechism, pour upon them the pure water of doctrine, the sweet dew of grace; and with what charming eagerness they drink it! and how quickly and how entirely they are penetrated by it!

Have you seen a thirsty child drink? It is the same thing at the Catechism; the children really drink our words, they quench their thirst; and their young souls, refreshed and revived, lift themselves again to God and to eternal things.

Ah! but only you must thoroughly understand, not thick, muddy water must you pour upon them, but pure, fresh, springing water, that water of the living Word, and of

heavenly grace, which our Lord says flows from the innermost heart: "*Flumina aquæ vivæ de ventre fluent.*"

And then in them you see the loveliest virtues open and burst forth; in natures which were before good, often marvels of piety and fervour; and most touching transformations in those which were evil.

I know not, gentlemen, a greater happiness for a priest than to be the instrument of these wonders.

It is thus that the Catechism, seizing and penetrating the souls of these dear children little by little, will infuse into them the Christian virtues one by one, will make them love Religion, will transform them; and the Catechism will thus be for them a real school of Jesus Christ.

SECOND DISCOURSE.

GREAT EXAMPLES.

HOW, IN THE CHURCH, THE WORK OF THE CATECHISM HAS ALWAYS BEEN UNDERSTOOD AND DONE.

I.

Do not suppose, gentlemen, that, engrossed by my zeal, I have, in our first discourse, traced out an Utopian picture of a work admirable indeed, but impossible to be realized.

No, all this has been done and is still practised ; and nothing is less new than what I ask shall be done amongst ourselves.

There has never been any change in the Church as to the necessity and the incalculable benefit of the Catechism, understood and practised as we have just described.

A rapid review of the history of the Church would show this with the clearest testimony.

From S. Augustine, consecrating the first years of his Episcopate to composing his beautiful book *De catechizandis rudibus*, for a Deacon of the Church of Carthage, who had been appointed a Catechist in that capital of Africa ; down to Bossuet, who thought he honoured the last days of his ministry, and added something to the glory of all his labours, by giving to the children of his diocese the celebrated *Catéchisme de Meaux ;* from Origen and the famous Catecheses of Alexandria down to Fénélon ; and from Bossuet and Fénélon down to our time, there has been but one voice on this subject throughout Christendom.

If you study closely the works written on this subject,

either in the first centuries, or in the middle ages, or in modern times, or even in our own days; if you search there for the spirit and the method which guided the most celebrated Catechists of the Church, it is truly marvellous to find always the same inspiration, the same devotion, the same affectionate care, with principles, with a wisdom and a method invariably constant in their essence, notwithstanding accidental and necessary variations in their form.

The greatest men, the most illustrious geniuses, as well as the most eminent saints, have been unanimous on this subject. They understood not only the general principles in the same way, but also the details and the practice; S. Augustine was of the same mind with Benedict XIV., Bossuet with Origen, S. François de Sales with S. Charles Borromeo; Chancellor Gerson with S. Ignatius and S. Francis Xavier; the Abbé Fleury, Massillon, Rollin, Lhomond, with S. Linguori; the venerable Boudon with Monseigneur Borderies, Bishop of Versailles, who, at the beginning of this century, was the incomparable model of Catechists.

And if you would go to the bottom of things, you would see that the governing principle of this admirable unity of views and feelings and methods, was simply that all these holy Bishops and all these holy Priests were of the same mind with S. Paul and with Jesus Christ; they remembered the narration in the Gospel: "*Et offerebant illi parvulos . . . et infantes . . . et complexans eos et imponens manus super illos, benedicebat eis.*" They all loved to repeat with our Lord: "*Sinite parvulos venire ad Me.*"

It is true that in all ages there have been certain minds, ill-informed as to this work, who have not felt its importance and its dignity. What happened to Gerson is a proof of it. You know that Gerson, a man so much thought of in his time, the illustrious Chancellor of the University of Paris, in his old age found wonderful comfort in holding the Catechisms for children in the Church of S. Paul, at Lyon, and such was his respect for them, and his confidence in the innocence of their age and the power of their prayers, that, feeling his last hour to be near, he desired to have them all around

him, on his death-bed, and asked them to commend to God "His poor servant, Jean Gerson."

The clever men of the time had been scandalized, and attributed this zeal of Gerson for the functions of a Catechist to a weakness of brain, pardonable in an old man, but really ridiculous. The beautiful treatise *De parvulis ad Christum trahendis*, was the reply which the Chancellor made to the astonishment of his friends, and to the sarcasms of his enemies.

But the holy Church was not slow herself to take in hand the cause of childhood, which had for a short moment been neglected; and in the holy Council of Trent a solemn decree ordered every Pastor to conduct the Catechism for children with care, at least on Sundays and other Holy days.

Hardly had the Church uttered her voice, when on all sides an admirable zeal was shown for the work of Catechisms. A multitude of Councils confirmed and published the decree of Trent, with rules of detail which show the importance they attached to it; men of the highest merit devoted themselves to seeing that the decree was carried out; and to perpetuate the happy influence of it in the Church, societies were formed solely occupied with the care of giving instruction and Christian education to children.

In Italy, the provincial Councils of Milan, presided over by S. Charles Borromeo, published most excellent rules for *Catechisandis pueris et rudibus.*

The Synods of Sienna, of Camerino, of Monza, of Céséne, of Forli; those of Parma, of Albano, of Montefiascone, and a multitude of others followed the same example. The Synod of Brescia, in Lombardy, spoke in the most urgent language. It exhorted the pastors to have for children "the heart of a mother," and lovingly to distribute rewards to them, so that they might love these salutary exercises.

Spain showed no less zeal and eagerness. The provincial Council of Valencia, and that of Tarragona published the decree of Trent, and formally ordered the Pastors to carry out the Catechisms with the greatest care, and in the way best suited to the understanding of children and poor people.

In the kingdom of Naples, the Council of Salerno, like that of Milan, required that the children should be called to the Catechism by the sound of a bell.

In Germany and in Belgium, the synods of Olmutz, of Ausbourg, and of Ghent; the constitutions of the dioceses of Treves, of Sion, of Constance, of Yprès, entered into the most interesting and the most instructive details on the manner of conducting the Catechism, so as to make it thoroughly understood that the Catechism (as we also have been trying to show) is not only instruction, but the religious education of souls; the same also in Savoy, the decrees of Tarentaise and those of the diocese of Anneçy principally.

In France, the Councils of Besançon and of Bourges, the synods of Metz, of Rouen, of Orléans; the statutes of Troyes, of Angers, and indeed of all the dioceses without exception, strongly enjoined on the Curés the ministry of Catechisms.

We see even that the New World hastened to execute the decree of the Council of Trent; the Councils of Lima and of Mexico rivalled in zeal those of ancient Christendom.

While on all sides the Councils were occupying themselves with this great object, Bishops, the most renowned ecclesiastics, Saints honoured by the gift of miracles, were seen themselves discharging the functions of Catechist; and by giving these great examples to the Christian world, most practically showing the importance of it. The learned and pious Cardinal Bellarmine, Archbishop of Capua, assembled the children in his Cathedral, conducted the Catechism himself, and distributed rewards to those who had answered the best; then he brought together his Curés to the Archiepiscopal residence, and, in special conferences, traced out for them the rules they should follow in order to acquit themselves well in this important function. Yet more, he went into the different parishes, and himself held the Catechism for the children in the presence of the Curés; and it is said that he spoke in so fatherly a manner that all were touched and moved by it. As soon as the Catechism of the Archbishop was announced, people of all ages pressed to it with the children, and Bellarmine took advantage

of this to address to them all wholesome advice, and moving exhortations.

The holy Jerome Emiliani, who is held in blessed memory through the whole of Italy, assembled the little children in Venice twice every day to catechise them, and by this means he revived piety in this great town.

The zeal of S. Charles Borromeo, in executing the decrees of the Councils, was above all. At Milan he instituted, specially for this work, the confraternity of Christian teaching, and tried to propagate it throughout his diocese. Every Sunday all the churches, both in town and country, would be seen filled with the faithful and with children, joining together to hear the teachings and the exhortations of the Catechism; after which they sang litanies, psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

These exercises attracted everywhere a great crowd of people, above all, the artisans, who put aside their games, dances, and other worldly diversions, to assist at these pious and interesting gatherings. The holy Archbishop took pleasure in visiting them, and his presence was a new source of joy and public edification.

When he died, there were in the town and diocese of Milan more than forty thousand persons who attended these exercises, about seven hundred and forty Catechisms, and more than three thousand Catechists.

Such, gentlemen, was the great and holy Archbishop's zeal for the Catechisms, and it is well known with what abundant blessings God rewarded him.

In Portugal, Dom Barthelemi, Archbishop of Brague, the very same who brought such great *éclat* to the Council of Trent, did everything so that the decree of the Council should be carried out in his immense diocese; and after he had resigned his episcopal charge, he gave himself up solely and entirely to this great work. It was the beloved and only occupation of his last days.

Saint Ignatius, on returning to his country, resolved also to be a Catechist for children, and when it was represented to him that no one would come to hear him, he replied, "If only one comes, I shall think myself rewarded for my trouble."

The great esteem which S. Ignatius had conceived for the office of Catechist, induced him to bind himself (together with his first companions) by a vow to this kind of ministry. The historian of his life relates that having become General of his Order, he began the exercise of his charge by conducting the Catechism in a church in Rome, where might be seen not only children, but even theologians, canonists, and persons of rank arriving in crowds to hear him. Though his language was strange enough and full of Spanish idioms, yet his exhortations made a great impression on his audience, and after having heard him, every one retired in silence, tears in their eyes, and their hearts filled with contrition.

Thus the Catechism was for him a Mission; he not only instructed, he exhorted, he won souls to God. He continued this exercise for forty days in the same church; and it is according to his example that the Superiors of the Company of Jesus to this day act as Catechists for forty days, when they begin their charge.

The same zeal animated S. Francis de Borgia; he might be seen going across the fields, a little bell in his hand, to call the children, and to teach them to love and practise Christian teaching.

In India, S. Francis Xavier loved to speak in childish language of the first elements of the faith to the children: "He went through the town of Goa, and with a loud voice besought the fathers of families for the love of God to send their children and their slaves to the Catechism." This apostolic man had in his mind, adds the author of his life, "that if at least the Portuguese youth were well instructed in the principles of Religion, and early trained to the practice of virtue, it would be soon seen that Christianity would revive in Goa . . . And, in fact, it was through the children that the town began to change its ways."

Need I insist on the way in which the Apostle of India, and all these great saints, without exception, understood the Catechism? They had no thought of only instructing youth in the principles of Religion, but also, as we desire, to form souls in the practice of virtue.

The pious Bishop of Cahors, Monseigneur Alain de Solminhiac (I cannot be weary, gentlemen, of citing to you these great models), never went out of a parish before he had himself given the Catechism, and his charity always furnished him with some new way of making the instruction interesting and agreeable, and profitable to his hearers for the amendment of their life.

But the model above all, the incomparable model, is, gentlemen, the lovable and sublime S. François de Sales, himself holding the Catechism for the children of Savoy. I am glad to bring before you the naïve and touching account which the historians of the time have left us of it:

"Every Sunday, the midday hour having struck, you would have seen going through the streets a young man, clad in a sort of blue coat of arms, in the front of which was the holy Name of Jesus, in letters of gold; this herald rang a little bell, and went through the streets crying with a loud and sonorous voice, '*Come to the Christian teaching, you shall be taught the way to Paradise.*' Then all assembled in their chapel in their appointed places; and the moment that the Catechist bent his knee toward the altar, two cantors, one on his right hand, the other on his left, sang in a melodious chant the Hymn of the Holy Spirit. The prayer having been said, the priest went to the pulpit, and the children sat down on the benches, on one side the boys, and the girls on the other; and recited, in the way of question and answer, some part of the *Catechism of Bellarmine;* after which the Catechist endeavoured to explain it more fully, and as easily as it was possible, taking away all difficulties and doubts; very often questioning and making them repeat what had been explained, and proving it by examples.

"And this catechetical work the holy Bishop generally undertook in turn with his brothers, the Canons; the hour over, they sang, either with music or with the voice alone, or with the organ, some devout song, composed by the holy man, or some other. Certainly he did sometimes, as a kind of recreation, give his mind to this sort of poetry; or perhaps he would choose some psalm of David, from the admirable and beautiful

translation of Philippe des Portes, Abbot of Thyron, and give it to the musicians to fit a tune to it.

"Twice every year, on a Sunday, he went with his children in solemn procession through the town, followed by his priests; and with such evident devotion, that, only looking at him, the hearts of sinners were struck with contrition. And always when the children repeated well or answered pertinently to his questions, he gave them images, medals which had been blessed, chaplets, *Agnus Deis*, little books of prayers, and other things of the same kind, which he always had with him, to reward them."

Père de la Rivière, who in his childhood had attended these Catechisms, thus speaks of them in his Life of the holy Bishop:

"I had the honour of sharing in this blessed Catechism; the like of which was never seen. This loving and truly good father was seated on a throne raised about five steps; all the childish army surrounded him. . . . . It was the greatest delight to hear how familiarly he explained the rudiments of our faith; at every turn abundant comparisons to illustrate what he said seemed to flow from his mouth; he looked on his little world, and his little world looked on him; he made himself a child with them, that he might form in them the inner man, and the perfect man according to Jesus Christ."

You see, gentlemen, what the Catechists of other days thought it their duty to do, in times which were certainly happier and better than our own.

How many more examples could I not cite? It is an extraordinary thing, that of those men who have been raised up, in modern times, to create those numerous Congregations in the Church by which piety has been made to flourish again, there has not been one who has not been devoted to the work of Catechisms, or who has not founded societies for this special work. It was thus that Père Romilion, founder of the Ursulines in France, began to exercise this ministry at l'Isle, in the Comtat-Venaissin, where he reaped a wonderful harvest. He so attached the children to his Catechism by the rewards which he gave them each time, and by all the holy devices

with which his apostolic zeal furnished him, that he kept them two or three consecutive hours without in the least wearying them. It was he who invented what we call "*Billets.*" Every week he had "*Billets*" recited by children, dressed as angels, and placed on raised chairs at different points of the Catechism. The author of his life adds, that after having, in the name of the rest, thanked these little angels for the instruction which they had had the goodness to bring to them from heaven, Père Romilion took the opportunity of repeating the things which they had said, and showing the importance and the necessity of them. Would not this, gentlemen, even now be a good work of zeal, and an excellent way of attracting the parents to the Church, and thus instructing them, under pretext of letting them witness the proofs of knowledge given by their children?

Père Yvan, founder of the Congregation of Notre-Dame-de-la-Misericorde, also gave the Catechism every Sunday to children, and his zeal led him even to carve wood himself that he might have images to give them.

Lastly, you know that S. François Regis generally began his Missions by the Catechism, and that S. Vincent-de-Paul, being a Curé in la Bresse, set himself to learn the patois of the country, so that he might be the better able to conduct the Catechism.

If, gentlemen, these great examples of zeal were necessary to effectually influence the Shepherds; so also, to perpetuate these examples in the Church, it was necessary to found societies devoted to the Christian instruction of youth; and, by the breath of the Spirit of God, a great number were seen to spring up. The holy Pope, Pius V., raised up by Providence to repair the ruins of the Church, and understanding the great necessity and the power of Catechisms, worked as they should be, instituted a confraternity of Catechists at Rome, for the purpose of reviving this work of restoration and of salvation.

In France, after his example, César de Bus wished to found a society of ecclesiastics who should be solely devoted to the catechising of children, thus forming an order of catechists in

the Church, in the same way as the society of Dominicans was an order of Preachers.

To attract children to his Catechisms, he gave them rewards, he made them sing sacred songs and recite dialogues. His inventive zeal had recourse to a thousand ways, each more attractive than the other.

The great Cardinal de Bérulle, M. Olier, the pious founder of Saint-Sulpice, the celebrated M. Bourdoise, and all the other great workers of the seventeenth century, showed the same zeal.

I have thought it useful, gentlemen, to fix your attention for some time on this series of great examples, and I will conclude by quoting to you the following words. They are addressed to a celebrated Catechist of that time, M. de la Chétardie, by a Sovereign-Pontiff, who himself, in the midst of his universal cares, was glad to steal some moments from the great affairs, and with joy, *libenter*, he tells us, to catechise the children. These are the words of Clement XI., they are well worthy of being meditated on:

"*Illud autem præ cæteris maximè nobis probatur, quod promovendæ puerorum in catholicæ fidei rudimentis* INSTITUTIONI (*Quod* PRÆCIPUUM ANIMARUM RECTORIS MUNUS EST), *tam strennè ac sedulo vaces, atque ad saluberrimum hoc et sanctissimum opus, undè prima* CHRISTIANÆ PIETATIS *fundamenta jaciuntur, et cui nos ipsi in suburbano nostro recessu identidem, ut accepisti, libenter impendere solemus, curam omnem et industriam, quemadmodùm facis, ut sumas vehementer optamus.*"

And now, gentlemen, I ask you, is it not beautiful and comforting thus to see how the love of Jesus Christ for childhood lives continually in the heart of the Church and of her pastors? Ah! it is evident that it was a sweet and dear legacy, which the Apostles received from their divine Master, and faithfully transmitted to their disciples; and, everlasting thanks for it be given to Heaven, apostolic devotion and tenderness have not yet perished from among us. This sacred spark, and, to use Fénélon's beautiful expression, *this heavenly flame* of the holy apostolate of youth still lives in our hearts. No, there will never be wanting to the Church those who love to be the friends and the fathers of that age which was blest

by our Lord, who find their happiness in lavishing the most assiduous cares and the most tender love upon it, and who think it their glory as well as their pleasure to be called the teachers and the apostles of childhood.

II.

I MUST, gentlemen, also add here: at the beginning of this century, it seemed that Providence willed to light up again this holy flame of catechistic zeal, with new ardour, in the Church of France, and this was not without deep reason. For if, in the seventeenth century, it was needful to reform,—a difficult work without doubt,—in the nineteenth it was necessary, so to speak, to *re-create*. You know well, gentlemen, what ravages had been made by impiety and revolution, into what discredit Religion had fallen in so many families, and in what condition the priests, on coming forth from their retreats or returning from exile, found their churches. To build again the holy City, to reconquer souls, to save the new generations, it was felt then that supreme efforts were needed; and one of the most powerful and the most successful methods with which God then inspired the heart of good priests to effect this work of religious restoration, was the Catechisms. One may say that never had they been used in the Church of God with so much love, enthusiasm, and success. Through them, faith grew in the young hearts, piety touched the families, Religion little by little recovered all her rights, and again entered into all the habits of life from which she had been banished, and better days could be looked for in the future. History, gentlemen, will tell it some day, and the labours of the illustrious Catechists of that period will have their place in the remembrance of a grateful posterity, by the side of the more brilliant, but not more fruitful efforts of the great orators, and the great writers of this century.

The Church and Province of Paris are, gentlemen, in this respect, rich with traditions and recollections. Who knows not the immense reputation of the old Catechisms of S. Sulpice

and of S. Thomas Aquinas? And here I must mention those men of God, whose names ought ever to be dear to the Church of France, and who were truly the new founders of the work of the new-born Catechisms amongst us: M. Frayssinous, at that time a powerful orator, since Bishop of Hennopolis; M. de Quélen, since Archbishop of Paris, M. Borderies, the incomparable Catechist, since Bishop of Versailles, all three united by the tenderest affection, all three friends of God and of youth, all three inspired by a profound zeal and an ardent love for Jesus Christ and for the Church. Very soon, with them and after them, the greater number of the venerable Bishops who have since been placed in the most important sees of the Church of France, devoted themselves to the same work. So also did many other holy ecclesiastics, who consecrated to it the first-fruits and the fervour of their zeal, a zeal and devotion which later became fully occupied in the holiest works of evangelical faith and charity. MM. de Sambucy, M. Letourneur, afterwards Bishop of Verdun, the angelic M. Teysseire, M. d'Argenteuil, M. de Janson, since Bishop of Nancy, M. de la Bourdounaye, and so many others.

Next to S. Sulpice and S. Thomas Aquinas, I may, gentlemen, mention also the Catechism of Perseverance of La Madeleine, founded by Monseigneur Gallard, formerly vicar of S. Aignan at Orléans, and since Bishop of Meaux and Archbishop of Rheims; the Catechisms of S. Louis-d'Antin, of S. Roch, of the Abbey S. Germain-des-Prés, of S. Philippe-du-Roule, and many more, in Paris and in the provinces, in towns and in the country.

There it was that young persons of both sexes attended regularly up to the time of their going out into the world, that is, up to twenty and twenty-five years of age. Their relations, their fathers and their mothers, often came themselves to these Catechisms of Perseverance, and sometimes in such great numbers that the chapels could not hold them.

And let it not be said that this is only possible in the large towns; with my own eyes I have seen these kind of Catechisms flourishing greatly in small provincial towns and even in villages, under the direction of intelligent and zealous pastors.

But this is a subject on which I reserve myself, hoping soon to treat of it thoroughly.

With regard to the Catechisms of Perseverance, there are also very numerous examples and decisive authorities. Bossuet says, in a solemn instruction addressed to his clergy:

"The Catechisms must be given, not only to children, but *principally to fathers of families*, and grown people. We must try to establish in this diocese a custom which may already be seen *in many others*, where *men and women of full age* attend the Catechism, together with the children."

How desirable this would be, and how necessary in this age, where there is so much ignorance in our rural populations!

"There are parishes," Bossuet says again, "where they are very glad to be asked questions at the Catechism, and to reply to them."

And what Bossuet here relates, I have seen practised quite lately, not only in the parishes and the Catechisms of religious Savoy, but in many of the old provinces of France, in Franche-Comté and elsewhere, with wonderful success and encouragement.

And is it not what the venerable Curé d'Ars practised all his life?

Of the fruits of grace produced by these Catechisms of Perseverance in a multitude of souls and of families, God alone knows the full extent; still any one can without difficulty picture it to himself, and whoever has seen them closely must be filled with admiration.

For myself, gentlemen, it is the greatest happiness of my life to have known in my youth the men whose names I have just given you; and, like them, and by themselves, to have been early appointed to this blessed work, whose fruits really are beyond all thought; there to have felt the first flame of zeal lighted up in my soul, and that love for children which will last—God, I hope, will give me the grace for it—even to my last breath.

Well! it is what I have learned in this ministry which I have so long exercised, the experiences handed down to us by these apostles of youth, their principles, their methods, and

their inspirations, that I would wish, dear fellow-workers, to lay before you; not with the intention of exacting from you their perfection, nor every detail of their method, but at least so that the work being revealed to you in all its fulness, such as it is, and in its true aspect, your fervent and enlightened zeal may apply the principles, according to the resources of the place, and the circumstances in which you find yourselves.

And do not imagine, gentlemen, in reading the faithful account of what has been done for Catechisms, in all time and by the greatest men, that the motive of this great work has been an unreasoning fancy, a mere feeling for the children, or the effect of a natural love and sympathy for the charms of that age. No, you must look higher; this work is the great work of Christian regeneration, the work of the kingdom of heaven and of the salvation of souls, and hence the reason that from the beginning it has inspired such wonderful devotion.

And now, gentlemen, we must rise to the very source of all the inspirations, of all the principles, of all the teachings. S. François de Sales, S. Charles Borromeo, S. Vincent de Paul are grand masters, perfect models; but there is a Master greater than they, Jesus Christ; and they themselves were only great and superior because they more nearly than all others approached the Divine model.

Let us now, then, gentlemen, study our Lord Jesus Christ, His love, His respect for children, and His Divine relations with them; and thus we shall find, both in the very groundwork of human nature, and in the highest revelations of faith, the determining motives for that zeal which childhood demands of us, we shall find the holy example of the love and respect which we owe to it, and all this taught by irresistible lessons, and amidst wonderful scenes.

THIRD DISCOURSE.

THE SUPREME EXAMPLE:

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST AND THE CHILDREN.

For forty centuries, as you, gentlemen, are aware, childhood in this world was not only exposed to the contempt of the wise and to the indifference of legislators, it was also the victim of most vile and cruel customs, and of most unmerciful laws.

It may be said, that among the weak, the unhappy, and the poor; among all those, unfortunate by nature and despised by heathen society, none were more so than the children.

Everywhere there was a horrible eagerness to sell them, to expose them, to prostitute them, to kill them.

It is not only Christian apologists, or heathens converted to the Gospel, or philosophers when they became disciples of Jesus Christ, who attest it to us, such as Athenagoras, S. Justin, Minutius Felix, Lactantius, or Tertullian; certainly their accounts make one shudder, and they cannot be doubted; but there are others, and elsewhere I have quoted the terrible testimonies of poets, of philosophers, of historians, of the heathens themselves.[1]

Directly Jesus Christ appeared, He, on this point as on so many others, with one word renewed the face of the earth. "*Suffer*," He said, "*Suffer the little children to come unto Me.*" Yes, these sweet souls, these young immortal hearts, whom I have made in My image and after My likeness, let them come to Me, repel them no more, rebuke them no more, "Forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

[1] Discourse on "*les salles d'asile*," delivered at S. Roch, March 28, 1860.

It must be owned, that in the midst of the utter derangement of human feeling and the profound depravity of minds and hearts, this utterance was most marvellous! Certainly, He Who uttered it kept back nothing in revealing its power; He declared it, at once, fully; and the formidable Gospel revolution—formidable still to-day, and for ever, to selfishness, pride, and the avarice of men—was wholly contained in the blessing promised to little children, to the pure in heart, to the unhappy and the poor. There could be no self-deception; man must either revolt against the doctrine, or fall on his knees and adore.

The world revolted: and great as was the magnificence and the tenderness of this new revelation, it excited a frightful tempest in the heart of man; and it needed the Cross, the death of Jesus Christ, and three centuries of martyrdom, before the God of heaven and earth was acknowledged here below as the Saviour Who had come to seek His children, and to avenge their oppressions.

Still these promises always found somewhere a resting-place, God had kept it for Himself. With so many disasters, so much disorder and sorrow, such a derangement of nature and of the human heart, there yet remained on earth one asylum, one last asylum, where everything was not upset and overwhelmed!

It had long been an asylum for sorrow, for suppressed tears, for expiatory sufferings, yet with all this was found also the hope of a better future. God had not permitted that the noblest, the purest, the most sacred thing He had created on earth, the heart of mothers, should perish in the great shipwreck of all human virtues! The mothers at once understood Jesus Christ; their heart deceived them not; and high and transcendent as were His words, though the end to be attained seemed something away from this earth, though henceforth the crown of maternal dignity must be something holy and austere, yet when the mothers heard that sublime and tender voice saying, "Suffer the little children to come to Me, theirs is the kingdom of heaven," they ran to Him.

And from that day, after that word, how delightful it is

to see, in the Gospel, how our Lord scarcely again walked on the earth without being surrounded by children and their mothers.

With that infallible instinct whereby the heart knows where love exists, these poor mothers came to Jesus Christ in full confidence, and brought their children to Him; carrying some on their arms and in their bosom, holding others by the hand, they besought Him graciously to touch them, to bless them, to lay His hands on them, and to pray for them: "*Oblati sunt ei parvuli, ut manus eis imponeret, et oraret. . . . Afferebant ad illum parvulos ed infantes.*" The Gospel which relates this beautiful scene, expressly says both: *infantes et parvulos.* May not one here read the outline of our *crêches* and homes, of our little Catechisms and of our schools?

I.

But, gentlemen, I must set before you, in all their detail, these touching scenes, which are so full of teaching; nothing can so interest or enlighten you on the subject we are considering.

Our Lord, then, suffered Himself to be surrounded by all these little children, and Himself coming close to them, He looked on them with ineffable love, He sweetly caressed them, with His divine lips He touched their pure foreheads, He placed His hands on their innocent heads, and prayed over them, as their mothers had besought Him: "*Et complexans eos, orabat super illos.*"

All the Evangelists record this circumstance, Jesus Christ praying over the little children; yes, this divine Saviour prayed for these poor children! They are so weak, so young; the journey will be so long and so dangerous, they will meet with so many snares and deceits! Ah! yes, I can understand that their mothers would beseech the Saviour to pray for them; I feel that this divine Saviour would gather in His heart His tenderest and most powerful prayers, and that He would say them over these dear and gentle children, to

preserve them from evil, to guard their innocence, to place them as it were under the shelter of His love, at least in these early and pure joys of the morning of their life.

But what is no less charming to see in the Gospels, is that not only the mothers, but that the children also felt themselves drawn to our Lord, they understood the confidence of their mothers, and they showed themselves yet more trusting still.

The truth is that, whether it were the sweet look of His eyes, or the smile of His lips, or the loving words which proceeded from His mouth and His heart, there was in our Lord a certain inexpressible attraction for them, and thus in the Gospels one meets with them continually on His footsteps when He was going through the towns and the villages of Judea.

These little children loved Him, they followed Him everywhere. The happiness of seeing Him, of hearing Him, of being near to Him, made them forget everything else. They pressed round Him as closely as possible; they tried to pierce through the crowd; their little faces were always to be seen in the front. They felt that they were loved, they came with full confidence, as when one knows one is specially loved. Our Lord made them come near, He blessed them, He embraced them, He showed them to His disciples.

There are two examples of this love of the children for our Lord, which touch me specially, and which will show how great this love was: thus, following Him even to the heart of a wilderness, we see them forgetting all the needs of life, and that for three days. When our Lord miraculously multiplied the loaves to feed the fainting crowd in the midst of the sands of the desert, we find that in this crowd were many children: the Gospel, enumerating those who had been miraculously fed, adds, "*besides the children.*"

Later, when our Lord, some days before His Passion, made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the children were there again in the crowd, in the front: these sweet children, who had so often seen Him work miracles of goodness, who perhaps had been more than once blessed by Him, were there, joyful

and delighted; they climbed the trees, they cut the branches and covered the road with them, they ran on before, they came and went, they announced His coming from afar, they mixed their cries with the acclamations of the people; their faces were radiant, and with the excitement and simplicity of their age, they came into the temple, and their cries echoed even in the holy place: "Hosanna to the Son of David." And our Lord was pleased with their homage, and with the genuine shouting of the innocent voices; and when the Pharisees would have had them silenced, He justified them: "Is it not written," said He to these hypocrites, "that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God has perfected praise?"

For myself, gentlemen, nothing touches me more than to see this excitement, this enthusiasm of the children for our Lord on the eve of His Passion. And when Judas had betrayed Him to His murderers, there must have been some among the children who were overwhelmed with sorrow, on seeing Him Who had so loved them led away to death; and some would have been with their mothers, when they were weeping for the Saviour, and when our Lord, kind and compassionate even to the end, said to them, "Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

But above all, there are three scenes in the Gospel where the love of our Lord for the children is revealed with incomparable tenderness. Let me study them, gentlemen, with you; our Lord gives here grand lessons for all, but to none so forcibly as to us, to us Ministers of His Gospel. For, gentlemen, you will remark: the disciples of Jesus Christ understood nothing at first of these great things, which were the very soul of the Gospel; nothing of the tender love of their Divine Master for childhood; and being irritated with it all, they greeted these little children and their mothers harshly, and were even threatening to send them away.

But you will remark also, that our Lord, always so kind and gentle, seemed here to forget His gentleness, and was angry with His disciples; and looking into their heart, and seeing it without any tenderness for these dear ones, He said to them, with the deep feeling which had stirred His soul, "Let the

little children come to Me—forbid them not to come to Me." Then He Himself called back the little children, He came near to them, and looking at them with emotion, He added that not only the kingdom of heaven was theirs, but that it belonged only to those who were like them.

Ah! when our Lord, with hands extended over these dear children, solemnly spoke these words, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," it was the eternal glory and blessing of childhood which He proclaimed; it was also the profound revelation of the mystery which, gentlemen, we are now studying, the mystery of the charity and of the tenderness which is due from us all to childhood.

What a lesson it was for the disciples, and for us! But also what joy, what honour, what happiness, what exalted dignity, for these poor mothers! for you must observe that, in this same chapter, and just before the scene with the children, our Lord had been discoursing with His disciples on the subject of Christian marriage, and of virginal and maternal dignity; and it is after raising the virgins almost to heavenly dignity, that our Lord offers also to the mothers and their children the kingdom of heaven as that which belongs to them, their own and for ever.

This then is the most important point of this great doctrine, and we must endeavour thoroughly to grasp it.

Moreover, gentlemen, there is in this saying, so divine a meaning and one so necessary to be understood, that our Lord willed to repeat it in another scene, related, like the former, by three evangelists; a scene equally lovely, and which again gives us a grand and powerful lesson, together with a sublime example of tenderness and kindness towards children. One day, it was the day after Tabor, our Lord had been transfigured on the mountain, and had shown Himself, glorified, to the three disciples; coming down from Tabor, He had returned into Galilee; and on the way He had announced to His disciples His future death and His resurrection, His humiliations and His sufferings, the necessary prelude to His glory and to His triumph. They, on the way, understanding nothing of the mystery of His sorrows, had broken out into rivalries, and had

disputed who should be the greatest in the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Meanwhile they arrived at Capernaum. Fatigued with the journey, our Lord enters a house, and having rested there a moment, asked of His disciples, "What was it that you disputed by the way?" But they, confused and ashamed at its being known, were silent. Then the Saviour seats Himself on one of those humble pulpits whence He loved to give His teachings;—sometimes, as you know, at the foot of a mountain, sometimes on the shores of a lake, or in a ship, or by the wayside;—sitting down then, He called the twelve, and began a wonderful teaching. Ah, gentlemen, here we all have to gather up what is so touching and deep in this immortal teaching. The Master, then, calls a little child, He places him near to Himself, in the midst of His astonished and attentive disciples; then embracing him, He shows him to them, and says to them. "Except ye be converted,"—weigh well these words, gentlemen, they teach us perfectly two great things, humility of heart and respect for childhood: *If you change not your thoughts, your feelings and your life*, such is the force of the words, "Except ye be converted,"—"if ye do not become as this little child, understand well, you will neither be the first nor the last in the kingdom of heaven; you will never enter it."

This is not enough, our Lord proceeds: You desire to know who will be the first in heaven? Well, hearken to this! Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child,—by charity or humility,—he shall be the first in the kingdom of heaven. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a child—as a little child, he will not enter into that kingdom; for the kingdom of heaven belongs only to such as are like them. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

II.

And if now, moved and astonished at all these things, you are seeking the real reason for them; if, gentlemen, you ask me why had the Saviour this special favour towards children,

why it is necessary to be like them, if we would enter the kingdom of heaven, I will answer you.

I could tell you at once that a child is a weak and delicate creature, who has nothing to protect him but his innocence and his tears, and whose very feebleness makes us feel for him; that a poor child is specially helpless, weak, and poor in the most sorrowful sense of the word; and by that very title, the kingdom of heaven being the gift of the infinite goodness of God, the great gift of His compassion for our miseries, the child has the strongest right to it; while grown men, those who think themselves something here below, who lift their head higher than others, and who often try even to lift it higher than God, who, in the pride of their pretended greatness, think they need neither God nor man; these take time and life as their own property, and give themselves up to all the corruption of pleasures, to the ambition of riches, and to the most miserable vanities; in a word, they take possession of existence, as if there were no Creator, no eternal laws in heaven, no moral laws on earth, and thus with a light heart they break with God and with eternity. Ah! I can understand that these are far from the blessings of the kingdom of heaven; and I can understand also that before the Son of God, children who are humble and true, who believe that they have need of God and of everything, who in the ingenuousness of their age know nothing of that pride, which is the worst depravity of man's heart, I can understand that these children are more fitted for the kingdom of heaven, and more worthy of the celestial gift, than those who believe themselves to be wise, rich, strong, sufficient for themselves without God.

Without any doubt, gentlemen, this is a weighty reason, and you can see all the force of it; but I draw others from the wonderful gifts of childhood. I have always dearly loved children, and I shall always love them; I know their faults and their characters, and I have often said that their faults made them still more lovable in my eyes; because in these faults there is no cunning nor deceit. They are simple, ingenuous and open. You speak to them with affection, they listen to you; you love them, they love you. You tell them

that there is a kingdom of heaven: they are delighted to learn it. You tell them there is a Son of God Who came down to earth, Who was born in a manger, and Who died upon a cross to save us: they believe it with joy. They have no difficulty in thinking, since man had such great need that God should come to him to save him, that God did come. In the clear simplicity of their reason, they understand why the Creator should come down to His creation to save it, since He had already condescended to come down to create it. They feel that God coming to hold out a hand to the work of His hands, has, as Redeemer, only finished the work of the Creator. To the child, to this young and quick mind, which has not yet by contact with men lost its candour and uprightness, in whom the corruptions of the world have not yet changed the simple and sublime taste for pure truth, the one is not more astonishing than the other.

The man, on the contrary, who is advanced in life, what is his misfortune, his great misfortune? It is that he has not kept this intelligent simplicity, this intuitive freshness of mind and heart. No, this real, this primitive reason he has not preserved in the living and early brightness of its dawn; he has it no more, and hence it is said, "Unless ye become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."

Alas! who knows it not? The man who has lived long is defiant, suspicious; to the fresh faith of his childhood doubt has succeeded; and often deceived in life, he has learned to measure his steps, and to leave the right path. Moreover, the things of earth absorb him, and the things of heaven do not interest him. To believe and to love, he must recover the simplicity and straightforwardness of childhood. "Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."

We must add that above all, a child is innocent; he has not yet felt the storm of passions in his heart, he has not given himself up to vice, he has not wasted his life in the evil joys of the soul, *mala mentis gaudia;* and as he is innocent, he is good, he is loving; and therefore Jesus Christ loves him, and imprints a kiss on his pure forehead, and presents him as a

model to His disciples. On the contrary, it is very difficult to go through life without meeting the dust and mud of the world, and when the heart is changed, stained and corrupted, it becomes wicked; and therefore it is that we must return to the purity and goodness of childhood, if we desire to enter the kingdom of heaven. See, therefore, why the kingdom of heaven belongs in the first place to children; for them it is first of all prepared; it is to children, to humanity in its early stage, we must first proclaim it: they receive it then with joy, and this grace once entering their heart, remains there, at least unless the corruption of the world, at a later age, comes to banish it.

Such is childhood, such are its attractions, such its touching privileges; and therefore it is, gentlemen, that Jesus Christ, not content with lavishing on it His special tenderness, has willed that eternal glory should only be had at this price, and that the gates of the heavenly kingdom should remain shut to whoever should refuse to abase himself, by a thorough conversion of his life and his heart, even to the humility, the simplicity, and the innocence of that age.

See again, gentlemen, how far the esteem and love of Jesus Christ for children was carried, in the following words, more solemn perhaps than all those we have yet studied. Our Lord, in speaking to the Jews, after having struck down the pride of Chorazin, of Bethsaida, of Capernaum, by those great and terrible words you know; then He suddenly remembers the children, and at this remembrance His heart is moved, and He utters the cry, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." And why? Listen; because the mysteries which can save the world—"these things Thou hast hid from the wise and prudent, and hast REVEALED THEM UNTO BABES. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

Yes, these wise, these prudent ones, their pride infatuates them; they believe themselves to need no Master, and they reject the Revealer. But the mysteries from above are not to be discovered by the wisdom of human science, they are only learned by the revelation of God. "No one knoweth the Son, but the Father, neither knoweth any one the Father, save the

Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." Well, this revelation will not be made to the proud; it will be made to the humble, to the little ones and the children: "Thou hast hid these things from the wise, and HAST REVEALED THEM UNTO BABES." And if the wise ones desire to have a share, they must make themselves children in mind and heart. Children, simple and innocent hearts, humble and docile souls, these, says our Lord, are those to whom I bring the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; it is these to whom I cry, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

Such as these, then, gentlemen, are the Saviour's privileged ones; to these the revealed truths are given; and they with joy believe them. It is the little ones, the gentle and humble of heart, the children, who find the yoke of God easy and light; good and docile, they listen with simplicity, they receive the Gospel yoke with joy, they taste the sweetness of it.

III.

AND do not think, gentlemen, that I am here tracing for you a fancy picture of childhood, an ideal which has never been realized, except in the Gospel, in the track of our Lord. Ah! I am, and always have been, a poor servant of God and of souls; well, I myself have seen, I have experienced, in my small measure, all that I have just told you. In my whole life of experience, nothing has left a more lasting, more indelible remembrance.

There is a place on earth where all the wonderful graces which I have just described to you of this blessed age are to be seen and felt. This place, I know it, I have long lived in it, and I cannot now say again the word, already so often repeated, without deep emotion,—it is the Catechism; yes, it is the Catechism which is still, here below, as once it was in the Gospel, the school of Jesus Christ; and for the children His love gathers together there, it is a school of truth, of

virtue, and of happiness. Yes, it is there one can easily understand the preference of the Saviour for children, and the truth of that word, "of such is the kingdom of heaven." There one reads in their faces the ingenuousness of their souls; there, in the very quickness and purity of their looks, one can see the freshness, the openness, and the sincerity of their minds; even those who have unhappily sinned already, and who do not bring to the Catechism this early flower of innocence, grow pure as they listen to you. Their soul at that moment breaks away from itself, it joins yours, with you it is lifted up; you carry it up with ease into heavenly regions; it follows you with delight.

Only look at them as they listen there, all as it were hanging on the lips of the friend of God who is speaking to them. What a charming sight! Those bright faces, those innocent eyes, those happy looks, those countenances on which is reflected every impression of their souls as they are moved by the fire of the word of life! How teachable they are, how easily touched, how yielding! How their soul opens out with a sweet eagerness to truth and light! Is it not truly the realization of the Saviour's words, "Thou hast revealed them to babes"?

For myself, I shall never forget the sight which these children presented to me, as I spoke to them; all eyes, sparkling and brilliant, fixed on me; they seemed like a charming mirror of their souls, struck at that moment by the Divine word, as the pure crystal is struck by the sun's ray; it was truly the mirror of God. Truth was there gloriously reflected; one felt that the mysterious word of eternal and Divine love, "Father, Thou hast revealed them to babes," was being accomplished. Every word, like a ray, sparkled on their faces, was reflected on their bright countenances; they sent me back their light again; I was lighted up myself. In the words of the old author of the life of S. François de Sales, so charmingly written, you have already seen, gentlemen, perfectly expressed, what I am now wishing to describe to you, that marvellous effect of the word of the Gospel upon the souls of children; that word which, going from the heart of the Catechist, is

echoed immediately in all the young hearts who form his little audience. The old writer uses this charming expression to describe S. François de Sales holding a Catechism: "He looked on his little world, and his little world looked on him." What grace in the very words! This reciprocal look of the Catechist and the children marks well that mutual penetration of souls, which is found nowhere else in the same degree, because nowhere else does Divine truth find souls so open, so accessible, so well fitted to receive the mysteries of heaven, to drink the first dew of grace and love. Yes, it is a beautiful lesson, a sublime revelation; when the Catechist, thus surrounded by children with rapt gaze and full hearts, lifts his eyes and hands to heaven, truly he is as an Angel of God, holding all these souls in his hand, and carrying them with him towards the heavenly kingdom for which they were created.

Such, gentlemen, are the undying privileges of that age which the Saviour has so loved and blessed. And to this great lesson of love and zeal our Lord, in the following words, adds a deep lesson of respect: "*And whoso shall receive one such little child in My name, receiveth Me.*"

Ah! gentlemen, if we had a lively faith, what an impression these words would make on us! what encouragement we should find in them! For now it is the Divine child Jesus, it is this God full of grace and charm, and made a child for us, Whom in these children we receive and love.

"He who receives, who is kind to one little child in My name, it is Myself whom he receives, Myself to whom he is kind. Whatever ye shall do to one of the least of these children, it is to Myself ye will have done it."

Thus this good Shepherd, this tender Father, Who is the model for our respect and love for children, becomes also the object of it.

He seems to say to us, "Open the eyes of your soul, this little child, he is Myself, he is not only a sweet and innocent creature who will enter My kingdom; he is Myself. See Me in him, him in Me, and only approach him with tender love and holy respect." But also, "Woe to him who offends them!" What a terrible word! And yet, gentlemen, it must be said,

what offences does not childhood now receive in the world, and sometimes even when it should only meet with good examples!

Ah! to offend (to scandalize) a child—to tarnish in any way that open face, to stain these young hearts, to pollute such souls! To this child who knows nothing, who does not even suspect evil, to make this frightful revelation, to open this miserable view, to bring this dark apparition before him, to cast this shadow on his pure heaven! Woe to him! "*It were better,*" says our Lord, "*that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea!*"

We must meditate on these terrible words ourselves, gentlemen; yes, ourselves; for, alas! it is too easy, without knowing or wishing it, to leave bad impressions on children. Childhood is delicate, very delicate; and it may happen, even to Catechists, even to Priests, that from forgetfulness or negligence, by hastiness, or from want of gentleness and kindness, or of piety or gravity, or from not answering to the ideal, which in his simplicity and innocence the child has formed of Religion and of a Man of God, it may happen that they are offended, for a long while sometimes, perhaps for their whole life!

Take heed, our Lord says to us, their Angels are powerful in heaven, they will avenge them. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for . . . their Angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven!"

A painful recollection occurs to me at this moment, and I must tell it to you. I have often told you, gentlemen, of the sorrow I feel, a real and deep sorrow, because I cannot help seeing, in that which causes it, a real contempt for children! Yes, is it not to despise them, to treat them with an offensive contempt, when they are given, as may sometimes yet be seen, the worst place in the house of their Father, in the Church, far away from the holy altar, relegated to the extreme end of the holy congregation, under a freezing porch?

Is this to respect and obey the word of our Lord, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me"?

Ah! our Lord tells us their Angels, who "always behold

the face of My Father which is in heaven; there their Angels are with them, and they will one day reproach you."

I have tried, gentlemen, to recall to you, in all their breadth, the great lessons which our Lord gives us as to the manner in which we should deal with childhood, and it would be difficult to find lessons stronger, deeper, or more striking. And to His words He added the authority of His own example; He shows Himself to us as an admirable model of tenderness and respect for children. Ah! if before this example of our Master we do not feel our souls thrilled and moved, if we do not feel our hearts also filled with charity for these dear children, if we think little of our mission towards this age, if we are only sensible of the faults which did not alienate the Saviour from them, and which are compensated for by so many admirable qualities, if we speak to them severely and sharply, if we lose patience with them, if we are ourselves disheartened, ah! are we worthy of Jesus Christ? have we the spirit of our Master? Do we grasp the essential thing in our Ministry? Yes, that which is the chief, the one thing needful, the very end of the Ministry we have to fulfil, even the saving of souls.

On this subject, gentlemen, I could give you most weighty and most striking reflections. But the time is far advanced. It shall be the subject of our next discourse.

FOURTH DISCOURSE.

CHILDREN ARE THE MEN OF THE FUTURE.

Let us now, gentlemen, go to the bottom of this, let us search yet further for the reasons for this tenderness and anxiety, these attentions and cares which our Lord demands of us for the children. Is it only because of their weakness, or their charming ways, or because of their ingenuousness and openness? No doubt they are the privileged ones of the heavenly Father, the most favoured learners of revealed truths, the first inheritors of the kingdom of heaven in their simplicity and innocence; but is it only for that reason that we must devote ourselves to them with so ardent a zeal, and, so to speak, concentrate on them all the most burning ardour of that zeal? No, gentlemen, there is another reason for it, deeper yet; and in the midst of those charming scenes which we have just been contemplating, there even our Saviour uttered words which are to us as a flash of light, the ultimate and complete revelation:

"The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost!"

Here is the final cause of it all. The Son of Man is the Saviour of the world, the Saviour of men, the Repairer of ruined humanity. Well, this is why He sets Himself, above all, to save childhood!—why He loves the children, why He seeks them with such care, why He first blesses them Himself, and requires us to love them and bless them after His example. The child is really the man, with all his possible future of virtue and happiness; he is, if I may so speak, humanity in its flower. The whole life is in the child as the fruit is in the

flower. Childhood is the one hope of the great human family, in a word, children are the men of the future. This is what the Saviour was contemplating when that cry broke from His inmost heart, "Take heed that ye despise not, that ye offend not one of these little ones . . . for the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost."

Observe, gentlemen, He does not say only "for the Son of Man is come to save the children"; no, He says, "for the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost," that is to say, the whole human race. And this is why He, Saviour of the world, Saviour of men, and of all humanity, is attracted at once towards the children, and shows them so tender a preference. He has left heaven, left the angels, to come to save men; and if the salvation of humanity, if the whole mystery of the kingdom of heaven seems to be summed up in the salvation of childhood, it is because in fact everything is evidently lost, if childhood is lost; nothing is saved, nothing is regenerated, if childhood is not. And hence that decisive and solemn conclusion with which our Lord ends this great discourse: "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven" (He Who wills that all men should be saved) "that one of these little ones should perish."

All this is very remarkable, gentlemen, and perhaps has hardly been sufficiently considered.

Children are the men of the future! Simple words, gentlemen, but containing an undoubted truth, which we can never sufficiently meditate on, if we desire to awaken and enkindle our zeal, and enter into the very ground of Catechetical work, like true servants of Jesus Christ, like real labourers in the Gospel.

And here let us not shrink from owning to each other what we are so often groaning over in secret.

We complain, and certainly with great reason, that the *men* escape from us: we bewail the sad condition of these poor people in our towns and villages, made what they are by a century and a half of impiety and revolutions. We say that the work for souls has all to begin again, that all the grand work of the Apostles and first preachers of the faith in our

country has to be done again, that it is a thorough regeneration we have to undertake, that what we have to accomplish is like a resurrection from the dead. Well, yes, all that is true; it is just that which has to be done, nothing less than that. Whoever does not so understand it, does not grasp the first elements of things, has not the smallest idea of the work which God demands of us.

But what is to follow from such a state of things? Ah, gentlemen, without doubt it follows that before everything we ought to be all apostles, men of God in all the force of the word, priests given up to grace (*traditi gratiæ*), resolved not to live for themselves, but only for God, for the Church, for souls, and to die in the cause, if need be, like the great apostolic men who overthrew paganism, established on its ruins the religion of the Son of God, and cemented the edifice with their blood.

Jesus Christ first gave His Blood for it, and the Apostles after Him gave their blood for it; we, after them, we must give to it our hard labours and our very life, if it is necessary. At that price we shall succeed.

And I may allow myself to add, that if miracles of grace are needed to make it succeed, God will work them. But above all, it is evident that in an age like ours there must be apostles, that is to say, pastors animated by zeal, men of generous devotion, and who will spend themselves when called on, will exhaust themselves in the work. And, gentlemen, why should we not be such men? Good, common, regular priests, but of ordinary virtue, no longer suffice. They may have been sufficient in better times; they do not suffice now. Besides, amongst you there are such men of God as I speak of. Why should we not be all such? You will say to me, "Indeed, we wish it, but what are we to do, what means must we adopt?" It would require, gentlemen, an entire pastoral treatise to indicate to you all the new measures of zeal which are called for by the new needs of the Church, and by the sad condition of society, which has so deeply fallen from the Christian spirit, which has become so estranged from early Christian manners, from its practices and habits.

But, at least, to keep to my subject, and at the same time

to give you my own conviction, which has been deeply reflected on, and is unchangeably fixed, I will reply to you, that the most suitable, the most thorough, the most infallible means for quickly regenerating our parishes, this diocese, and all France, is without any doubt the work of Catechisms. Yes, if this work is well organized, well done, conducted with zeal and perseverance; however great, however deep may be the evil, let us take courage, we can yet save all.

And the reason of it is very simple, I have already given it to you: it is that the work of Catechisms gains the children, and once again, that the children are the men of the future.

The men escape us. . . But then let us occupy ourselves with the children, who are still here, in our hand, whom Providence has caused to be born and grow up under our eyes; let us turn ourselves to these dear souls, whose conquest is more easy; let us bring them up under the eyes of the Lord. Let us make Christians of these children, good Christians, and we shall have greatly improved the present time and saved the future!

For these children will soon become men, and they will be wholly a Christian people.

Oh, gentlemen, it is not a very difficult calculation to make: your children of to-day and those of next year, and of the following years, in twenty years they will form your whole parish: they will be the fathers and mothers of families, the artisans, the labourers, the vine-dressers, the proprietors, the merchants, the magistrates; in a word, the whole people.

And, if you have gained these dear children to Jesus Christ, while you have been having them at the Catechism, if you have made good Christians of them, one day, under your successors, all this parish will be Christian, and it is you who, by your Catechism, have made it so.

And if, gentlemen, I need add anything to the strong and decisive words of our Lord, I will say, still supporting myself by the Holy Scriptures, that all this is based on a very simple reasoning: salvation depends on a good life, but what does a good life depend on more strongly than the religious education of the child? The Holy Spirit has said, "It is good for a man

that he bear the yoke in his youth." And again, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Which points out that it is difficult, very difficult, for a man to be virtuous in his mature age, and even in old age, if he has not been so in his childhood.

When then you are urged to do the work of the Catechism with zeal, it is not a work of supererogation of which we speak, no, it is a question of life or death for souls. Heaven or Hell, throughout eternity, neither more nor less, for all your parishioners, for the three hundred and fifty thousand in the diocese of Orléans, for the forty millions of souls who live in France, for all the faithful of the Church; this, gentlemen, is what is in the balance in this important question of Catechisms well or ill performed.

One may well say, if such an interest touched us not, or touched us but little, we should be very poor priests, we should not even be Christians; we should be men without faith, without heart, without feelings, worthy of all public scorn.

I look much to the Easter Communions, my dear fellow-workers,—not so far as to desire that you should depart from the rules, in order to have more Easter Communions in your parishes; not, as some perhaps think, so far as to make the number of Easter Communions the thermometer of the zeal of our good priests; God forbid! But still I do look much to the Easter Communions, and I ought to do so, because it is the means for bringing back every year and saving many souls in the midst of the generation which is passing, and of whom the greater number are perishing! Still, you must understand, that I look to Catechisms very well conducted not less than to Easter Communions, because Catechisms are the way to recover the coming generation, and consequently of thoroughly regenerating your parishes, and in time, and with the help of God, saving all the generations to come. In the work of Easter Communions, if I may so express myself, you glean; alas! before that the devil has made his harvest; you only glean! But by the work of the Catechisms, with full hands you sow in the Father's field, and it is a whole rich harvest of souls you are preparing for those who come after

you. Thus, above all, I look to the Catechisms; it is there, I do not hesitate to say, that, more even than in the Easter Communions, I discover the zeal and real usefulness of a priest.

Moreover, these great difficulties which you find with men of mature age, our Lord willed to experience them Himself: you need but open the Holy Gospels to see it; and therefore it is that He asks of you, after His example, to turn to the children. Say to these men, gentlemen, who have spent long years estranged from Christian practices, say to them with all the zeal of the Gospel, saying with our Lord, "Repent! for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," and it is for you! Tell them the story of the Prodigal Son and of the Good Shepherd, gather in as many as possible into the fold of Jesus Christ, into the house of the Father. Alas! how very rarely has this ever been a great number! But let not this part of your mission make you forget another yet more necessary part; think, think before all, of the rising generation, which comes to you fresh, ardent, with young and generous blood. Take possession of it at its entrance into life; fill up the avenues of its mind and heart; fashion it, while it is yet tender and flexible, at that time of life when, most happily, a religious custom, the precious relic of the ancient faith, brings it into our temples, and for many and happy days confides it, gives it over, to your affection and your zeal.

Thanks be to God, Who, in the midst of the shipwreck of Christian manners, has at least preserved for the children this precious day of the First Communion, which, thanks to the years of the Catechism which precede it, and to those which follow it, can repair all the disorders of early childhood, and prepare all the purest and most glorious fruits of virtue for the whole life.

I said just now, gentlemen, *the whole life of man is in the child, as the fruit is in the flower.* No doubt every flower does not produce its fruit, but it is certain that if there are no flowers, there will be no fruit, and the richest years are always those which have the finest spring.

Cultivate then these cherished flowers; surround these

precious children with care and love; all the hope of the harvest lies in them; it is the decisive age when impressions are liveliest, when the mind and heart are most accessible to culture, when the tender soul is most easily touched; above all, it is the fertile age when everything develops itself and grows either in vice or virtue, when habits are formed for the whole life. Irreligious in his childhood, alas, the man will almost always continue to be so: how, later, can he be recovered, when faith has no root in his soul, and when unbelief and the passions have always held it in subjection? On the other hand, pious in his youth, initiated into the secrets and the charms of a Christian life, having known and enjoyed the gift of God, one of two things will follow: either he will faithfully persevere; or if, in the whirl of life he goes astray, at least he will carry within him the seed of a return. But a generation which has grown up without knowing God, a generation which has not early "set its heart" towards Him, "whose spirit cleaveth not steadfastly to Him," this generation becomes and too often remains a "faithless and perverse generation."

How many experiences, some full of comfort, others full of sorrow, come every day to confirm these solemn words of the Holy Spirit! Who does not know how difficult it is to bring back to God those who have not made, or have not made well, their first Communion? More often, it is impossible. Even at the hour of their death, all the efforts of the most devoted zeal are powerless against incurable blindness and hardness.

On the contrary, who does not know what helps for a return to God one finds in souls who have known, who have loved God in their childhood?

In the confessional, in missions and in parochial retreats, ask returning sinners, "Did you make your first Communion well?" Almost all will reply, "Oh, yes, sir, by the grace of God. I have never forgotten it, and it is that happy remembrance which has decided me;" and often they add the name and praises of the good priest whom they loved in their childhood, and who was the means of their making that good first Communion; and if they had a pious mother, or, what is yet

more rare, a Christian father, they remember it with tears, and thank God for it.

For myself, gentlemen, I have continually in my life had the happiness of this experience, and again quite recently, in our retreats for men, in our Cathedral.

And you yourselves, have you not often had the same?

But, you will say to me, is it only by the Catechism that one can or that one ought to bring up children to be Christians? Is it not, above all, the duty of the family?

The family! Ah! no doubt it is man's first cradle, the cradle of his religious as well as of his natural life. But this great duty of parents, to form the soul and the conscience of their children, to bring them up in the knowledge and the love of God, how is it in these times fulfilled? Far, gentlemen, from finding here a reason against the indispensable necessity of the Catechism for saving the future, I insist on the contrary, that true zeal will here see yet another motive and even another encouragement.

But this is too important a question, and it will be better to leave it for another discourse.

FIFTH DISCOURSE.

THE FAMILY AT THE PRESENT DAY.

I.

To-day, gentlemen, I wish with you to examine a special and extremely important reason, for which I press the necessity of doing well the work of the Catechisms, particularly in the times in which we live; and also to do it in such a way that children shall not only be instructed in Christianity, but brought up in Christianity, and bound for ever, even with their whole soul, to this holy religion.

The reason is this: the work of the Christian education of children, now for a long time past has not been done at all, and we may say can hardly be done now but by ourselves, and in Catechisms; if it is not done by us, it will hardly be done by others; and if we do not do it in the Catechisms, we shall do it in no other way.

In other days, when the family was deeply Christian, when religious habits, impressions, manners, and laws reigned on the domestic hearth, when the young child, surrounded from his cradle by holy examples, was, under the eyes of his father and mother, in the midst of his brothers and sisters, naturally brought up with a respect for religion, and with the love of virtue; when everything he learned, all his tastes, even all his instincts, were born and developed under the rule of faith and fervent piety; when it was the very air he breathed, and like a cast on which his soul was formed and modelled, from his tenderest years; then perhaps the Catechism might have been only a school where the priest came, for a few months,

to add, by the weight of his words and the precision of his teaching, the last touch of authority, of decision, and of doctrinal soundness to the traditions, the habits and the lessons of the Christian family.

Then, perhaps, the ministers of religion might have confined themselves to ordinary preaching from the pulpit to all the holy congregation, only adding a few simple and special instructions for the children.

But now the times and the condition of things are much changed! In the present day, families who can be called thoroughly and deeply Christian are very rare! I repeat it, making all needful allowance for holy and glorious exceptions; but speaking in a general way, where shall we now find the Christian families of other days? Ancient manners, ancient habits, the ancient Christian life, where is it all? Is it in the great worldly cities? Is it in our smaller towns? Is it in our melancholy country villages? Is it among the poor?

In vain can we try to hide it: those happy days of the ancient faith are ours no more; those days when the poor, equally with the rich, regarded religion with veneration and love; when the Gospel was glorified by counting, among the most obscure classes, as well as among those of the highest rank, numerous disciples, who found their happiness in humble obedience to its laws, who were proud to transmit to their children, as a most precious inheritance, their respect and their gratitude for this holy religion, and who thus, afar off, prepared for the ministers of Jesus Christ the consoling hope of an easy harvest in the midst of the generations to come!

Above all, in our country, those poor but blessed families are become very rare, where the fathers used to guard the sacred deposit of the faith as the consolation of their poverty; where the mothers could add to their teaching the example and encouragement of the most lovable virtues; where the children, quite young, were taken into the arms of religion, there to receive the first lessons of wisdom, and there to shelter their innocence.

To these days of piety, of virtue, and of happiness, who

knows not what days have succeeded! Impiety, triumphant, has on all sides extended its deplorable conquests; and if the rich, after terrible lessons, may feel at last compelled to withdraw their homage from this great mistress of all crimes and of all miseries; yet the poor, less than the rich drawn to virtue by their own interests, are only too docile to this fatal teaching, and too often even now may be seen driving from them, and sometimes with brutality, the knowledge of the faith, in order that they may obstinately plunge and sink into the thickest darkness of irreligion.

Born in the bosom of this miserable darkness, the child of our workshops or of our villages often grows up in utter forgetfulness of heaven, in contempt for religion, and hatred of its ministers. Look at him as he goes along the streets of our great towns, or in the better class of villages crossed by our great roads; what does he respect? Who can look more impudent and bold than he? And how could it be otherwise? The tremendous name of God he never hears pronounced around him but in the midst of blasphemies; and if need be, Hell will know well enough how to send him some coarse teacher of impiety, to tell him that God is only a vain name, heaven a fancy, conscience a prejudice, and religion a tyranny; that magistrates and kings are unworthy oppressors; teachers and masters foolish and odious despots, and the ministers of the Gospel above all are enemies of all good, of all progress, enemies above all of the people.

And among the rich, among those who by reflection, by the misery of the times, by the great and terrible lessons of experience, have been brought back to religion, where is it? If the mother is Christian, what of the father, the brothers, the uncles? And if the father and mother are really Christians, are they masters of all which surrounds them, masters of what is said and done around them, either at home or abroad? In a word, the most fervent, those even who find their glory and their happiness in an entire obedience to the laws of religion, can they surround their children with all the examples needed by that tender age, so that they shall always live in a really Christian atmosphere?

How many of the most virtuous parents we have seen mourning over their incapacity in this respect!

So much for the most exemplary families. But what can we think of so many others, who are, I will not say ungodly, but indifferent to religion; where not only God no longer reigns, but where His most sacred laws seem to be ignored, where the sanctity of Sunday is almost unknown; where the most essential practices of Christian piety are forgotten; where even the commonest signs of Christianity have disappeared; where the name of our Lord Jesus Christ is never pronounced; where finally, instead of that atmosphere of faith which, in happier days, the child breathed under the paternal roof, he breathes now scarcely anything but religious indifference, and too often poisonous blasts, which penetrate the unfortunate child without his feeling it, and go far to destroy even the germs of virtue in his heart?

No, gentlemen, it is clear that what would perhaps have entirely sufficed formerly does not suffice now; so that to give children an enlightened religion and pure morals, to preserve or to retrieve their innocence, to bring them up in virtue, in spite of all they daily see and hear, we can no longer confine ourselves to *instructing* them, to telling them, coldly, didactically what the faith is, or what a mystery is; what the commandments of God and the Church enforce upon us, what must be believed concerning Jesus Christ, or grace, or the Sacraments, &c. We must at the same time, above all, inspire them with the love of God, the hatred of evil, a horror of sin and of everything which defiles the heart, an inviolable attachment to virtue; making them first solid and fervent Christians; afterwards, if need be, apostles in the midst of the world and their own families.

But where and how shall all this be done? when and how can this thoroughly religious education be given, without which religion becomes weaker and weaker in souls?

To fight with success against so many evil influences, which all conspire to deprave the rising generation; to save the child from so many dangers besetting him, to re-form, *re-create* in him the religious spirit, to fortify him against so many

prejudices, and to cure the faults which often he has imbibed with his mother's milk, must we not have another cradle, another family, another education of his heart?

But, this cradle, this family, this education, where shall it be found? In the Catechisms, and only in the Catechisms.

There only can he receive all the assiduous care which the evil of the times makes necessary for him; in a Catechism, conducted as it should be, he will find a protecting asylum for his faith and his innocence, like a holy cradle where his soul can be born again to a new life; there it is that religion, like a mother, will receive him with tenderness, will open to him her arms and her heart; and driving error and vice away from him, will lift up his understanding and his soul to unknown truths and love; will accustom him to prayer; will show him wonderful revelations of God and of heaven; of virtue and its rewards, of sin and its punishments; of Jesus Christ and of Redemption; will open out to him new prospects and a new path, will direct his first steps therein, and at last will admit him for ever into the Christian life, in that incomparable day of his first Communion, when Jesus Christ will Himself come to take possession of his heart.

II.

This, I say again, gentlemen, is the work which can nowhere be done so well as by the Catechism. I defy you to show me another home where this great work could be carried out, as it should be, with all needful care and pains.

Would it be at the *Great Sermons*, or even at the *Prônes*, such as are usually given? But who does not know that in sermons and in *prônes*, it is chiefly the faithful who are addressed, that children can learn very little there, and that these sort of instructions are nearly always too long or too grave for their age? And besides, will their parents bring them there? Are the parents themselves very constant there?

I ask you, gentlemen, excepting devout persons, who make it a part of their duty to be present at a sermon or *prône*, how

many young boys would you count there? Except perhaps the little children whom the Christian brothers or schoolmasters bring whether they will or no, and who often are so placed that they can hear nothing; excepting also those parishes where the Catechisms, and above all, those of Perseverance, being well conducted, have inspired the young people of both sexes with a taste for the word of God and for assisting at holy offices,[1] excepting these, how many hearers do you count at your *prônes?*

Shall it be in the *Confessional?* No doubt this is a great means of forming children in the practice of Christian virtues; the children receive there precise, detailed, directly practical advice, and most useful lessons; and they hear there precious exhortations which greatly help to form and raise up their soul; but they only go to it rarely, and the little time that the Confessor, obliged to hear other penitents after them and sometimes before, can give to them, hardly allows these lessons and these counsels to make much way in their soul, at least unless these young souls have been already perfectly prepared in a well-conducted Catechism.

I will even add, who are the children who go to Confession regularly? Those whom a good Catechism prepares and sends to it. Others only go now and then, perhaps never.

No; the *Confessional*, even if it did for them all it can and ought, would yet not be sufficient; the Confessional is a help apart, *sui generis*, very powerful, but yet a thing apart, appointed for a special end, and it cannot suffice for everything.

There needs, moreover, the solemnity of instruction and exhortation, the emulation of good examples, the teaching and practice of virtues, of prayer, &c.; in a word, we want the great advantages of public education, public catechising, that is to say, the work of the Catechism carried out and practised as we have described; the Catechism, the sanctuary of Jesus

[1] It is well known that in Paris, the parishes in which the faithful of all ages and conditions assist most regularly at the services and the *prônes*, are precisely those where the Catechisms of Perseverance have long flourished. It will suffice here to mention the names of S. Sulpice, of S. Thomas Aquinas, of the Madeleine, of S. Philippe-du-Roule, of S. Roch, &c.

Christ; the Catechism, the fold of Jesus Christ, for the youngest lambs, for the most feeble sheep of the flock; the Catechism, the family of Jesus Christ, representing, taking the place if need be of the Christian family, without which religious education is impossible.

I say "*representing the Christian family,*" and I would insist, gentlemen, on this point of view; it is important. In fact, it is a principle, a law, that to form and bring up a man there must be a family; it is the law of Providence; the natural man, body and soul, cannot be formed or reared without the natural family. I will say more, a Frenchman would not be reared and brought up as he should be in an English family, any more than an Englishman in a French family. That is seen at once, and many proofs could be shown of it. Well, in the same way a Christian man cannot be reared but in a Christian family. To make, to bring up a Christian man, the Christian family is a necessity.

And if you look at it, in the primitive Church, where as yet there was no Christian family, at least not for those who from unbelief were seeking to become Christians, was it not that the Catechumenate, its teaching, its exhortations, its trials, the Catacombs, the private assemblies, were like a family, were the true source of Christian life, the true home where it could open and be developed?

There the mind became accustomed to Christian thoughts, and the heart to Christian feelings; there the judgment was exercised to understand and to estimate the things of time and of eternity, no longer according to the light of profane or heathen wisdom, but according to the light of Gospel faith; there the soul became accustomed to love, to enjoy, to feel and desire the good things which the faith promises us; to fear and to reject the evils which it points out to us; then finally, morals, habits, pious affections were formed, first in the mind and heart, thence to pass into and be firmly and solidly settled in the whole conduct of Catechumens, making them fit to be received into the great Christian family.

Well, the work of the Catechisms is the same. This work is in fact the Catechumenate of the present time. No doubt the

difficulties are not the same, but the difficulties are real and considerable; and however different the times may be, the work is, in fact, the same always.

Now, as much as ever, I repeat, the work of the Catechisms must be so conducted, as no longer to be only a sort of school where a dry instruction is given, but a great religious institution where children of God are formed and brought up. They must constitute a home of true and strong Christian education, in a word, a family; and if I may use the expression, a *Christian interior*, with its principles, not simply taught, but inculcated, pressed into the heart, penetrating the life, and forming every-day habits; a Christian interior, with sound ideas, settled judgments, with an enlightened way of looking at everything; with its joys and its sorrows—its joys, bright, innocent, peaceable; its sorrows comforted; with its tastes, simple, but sufficient for the real happiness of the soul; with all its great and little interests; with its dignity, its decorum, its gravity of manner; and, above all, with *authority* and *respect*, those two great and holy things which belong to the *family* and to the evangelical virtues.

And for this, it is more and more evident that the *explanation of the letter of the Catechism* is not enough.

An education, a family, is something more than cold words, or a lesson, or a course, or dry teaching.

In a family, no doubt, children are taught, but still more they are advised, they are exhorted, they are encouraged, they are blamed, they are rewarded, they are loved, and they are made to love goodness.

And all this comes from the *spirit of the family;* that is to say, on the one hand authority and devotion, with every shade and every form of tenderness and zeal; and on the other, respect, docility, and confidence, with every shade also of filial love and gratitude.

This is what Catechisms and Catechists ought to be; this is what should be grafted into the minds and hearts of those who are catechised; this is what the children ought to find in their Catechists, and what in return they should bring to them.

By this means the Catechism will become to them the Christian family, the Christian interior; thus they will find there the impressions, the habits, the goodness, which will make them love the Catechism and religion, and which will, by degrees, form in them the sound, lasting, Christian life which will persevere.

It is thus that Christians, really worthy of the name, will be produced, understanding their religion, and knowing how to practise it, because the principles of Christianity will have penetrated into every power of their soul, and will have become the very groundwork of their life.

But in practice, too often one sees little of all this; so many Catechisms, unhappily, are so little like it, that some will be tempted to reply: Oh yes! no doubt this is the ideal perfection of the work, and it would be very desirable if it could be like that everywhere. But can it be? Is it possible to realize this beautiful ideal? Is it not the dream of a pious heart, but yet only a dream?

I affirm again, and with the energy of a conviction which is old and deep, that this ideal can perfectly be realized; I affirm it, because I have tried it myself for many long years, because with my own eyes I have seen it, not only at the Madeleine and at S. Roch, but above all at S. Sulpice, then at S. Thomas Aquinas, at S. Louis d'Antin, at S. Philip, and in other places besides. Yes, the realization is possible; and not only is it possible in the cities, but also, as I shall soon show you, in the smaller towns and even in the humblest villages; and when you have tried it, you will be as convinced of it as I am.

SIXTH DISCOURSE.

THE FAMILY IN THE CATECHISM.

I FINISHED our last discourse, gentlemen, by saying that the Catechism can be a family.

And the response is, "The Catechism a family! very good, excellent, admirable. I quite see and feel the necessity of it. The Christian family is lacking now; outside, in the world, it must be represented, formed again, from within, in the Church, in the parish, in the Catechism.

"I see, I feel all this.

"But all this is impossible.

"How will you persuade us that a Catechism can be a family? A Catechism, which lasts an hour or two, where children are brought together once a week, or, at most, two or three times, during a few months in the year; and children who are mostly strangers, unknown one to another, cannot make a family; that is to say, that close fellowship, the closest of all here below, which is formed by natural ties, which are ever the most binding and the sweetest.

"It is incomprehensible."

Well, gentlemen, by the help of God I shall make you understand it, and make you feel it, and those among you who have already had the happy experience will bear witness to the truth of my words.

Yes, a Catechism, well conducted; not only well explained, but well taught, understood and practised as it ought to be, according to evangelical principles and methods, this Catechism *can* be a family.

Once again, I am not speaking idly; I have seen it. Yes,

a family, that is to say, a hearth, round which the members joyfully gather, with a feeling of the closest intimacy; a sacred hearth where souls may rest themselves, be renewed, re-created, rekindled at the fire of the brightest and purest affection, and of the early friendships of life.

Yes, a family, that is to say, a sacred asylum, where the members are sheltered from outside dangers; where sweet converse is a consolation for the turmoils and the sorrows of earth, where in the bright and hopeful enjoyment of the most lovable virtues, the soul is strengthened against the dangers of the world; an asylum where innocence learns to be brave against vice and its attractions.

A family, that is to say again, a sanctuary where we may recollect ourselves, where dwells the calm happiness of the soul; where something is found of heaven and of God; where one feels happy, protected; where, in the peace and harmony of order, of love and respect, the heart unfolds itself; where our Lord gathers His children under His wings; where He nourishes them, carries them in His tender, fatherly arms; where, as says S. Bernard, *Heaven is more open, the air more pure, and God more near.*

A family, where we find a father, a mother, brothers and sisters, that is to say, all the sweetest and strongest feelings which have made man's heart beat, and have ennobled it here below; but lifted up to a supernatural and divine nobility, purity, and tenderness.

Finally, a family with its festivals, with its sorrows at separation, its joys at return; with its farewells, its wishes, its greetings of pleasure and hope.

And all this consecrated and expressed in hymns, in sublime prayers, breathed with the most touching sincerity.

I have said sisters and brothers, and I maintain it; yes, gentlemen, a real fraternal affection exists there, created by God Himself between all these dear children, all these young hearts which He has blessed. "We made our first Communion together, we were at the Catechism together." They say this, and this says all; it is a link, the strength and sweetness of which cannot be effaced.

And it is noteworthy, this family of the Catechism, far from making the other to be forgotten, makes it to be more loved; not only because the other family associates itself with this, and there finds itself again; the father, the mother, follow their children there, they talk of it at home, the little events of the one become the interest and delight of the other; but also because family affection seems there naturally to unfold itself. There good sons, good daughters, are formed. There all filial virtues are developed; the children return to the family home with more docility, more affection, more obedience, and more respect.

You see I have designedly used all the strongest expressions, those which give us most energetically and tenderly the idea of a family. Well, what have I done with all these images, all these similitudes? I have defined, I have described a Christian Catechism.

Ah! how often I have witnessed it all!

Look at them yourselves, these dear children, all gathered together in their holy chapel, quiet and one with another, under the eye of their Catechists, opening their souls to the same word of life, receiving the same breath of faith and love; singing, praying, sometimes weeping, together; their emotions, their joys, all the quick impressions of their age, all in common; having the same charming *fêtes*, receiving, drinking in the same heavenly dew, eating the same angels' food; contracting there, with all the deep and pure feelings of their early childhood, friendships which nothing later will destroy, so that when, after many and diverse vicissitudes, they meet again in the world, the memories of this sweet time being still fresh in their memory, they are drawn to each other as by a sort of mysterious and charming brotherhood.

Yes, I repeat it, when in a well-conducted Catechism children have been some time together, a wonderful affection grows up, and ties are formed which cannot be broken.

A Catechism which deserves the name, gentlemen, is so much a holy family, a home, a sanctuary, that the first day when the children join it, an unusual quiet seems to take possession of them; a sudden hush from all the outside excite-

ments, a deep impression of religious things is made in their hearts; all at once, they have felt that God is present, they revere Him, they love, they enjoy Him; and soon, in comparison with the beauty of holiness and the Christian friendship which they find in this new family, all the pleasures of the world seem to them insipid. Their pious *fêtes*, their sweet and innocent reunions, that is what they desire above all, what they wait for with holy impatience. How often parents have said to me, "Ah, Monsieur, my son (or my daughter) counts the days now from one Sunday to another; you have quite won his heart."

In vain the irreligious world surrounds them with evil examples, with dangers for their faith and innocence. The Catechism protects them; there, little by little, holy and heavenly influences possess their hearts and minds; and if I may so express it, they neutralize the bad examples, and the evil talk, and evil instincts; there, a barrier, a rampart is raised between the corrupting world and these young souls: tender and fragile plants which have trailed on the ground, but in God finding their support, stand upright and rise again towards heaven; weak saplings which the wind would have bowed down, but which are planted there under a calm sky, where the tempestuous wind blows not; clear and pure fountains which keep or even become clear in the quiet valley, in the hollow of the rock.

I am trying to express, in very feeble words, the grace and blessings which the children find in the sanctuary of this religious family; but now, laying aside all figurative language, I confine myself to declaring, gentlemen, that all I have said, I not only have seen, but it may still be seen, wherever the Catechism is conducted after the true method; all this takes place, all this is felt; all this is there said, and done, and sung with an indescribable reality and tenderness.

Moreover, I will indulge myself here by entering into some exact details, by telling you something of my most distinct experiences. You know, gentlemen, that for many long years I have worked at the Catechism, in Paris, in the parish of La Madeleine; it was under a man whose name is well known

and is dear to you, M. Gallard, since Bishop of Meaux and Archbishop of Rheims, and who was then Curé of La Madeleine. All that I saw and experienced there, he saw and experienced also, and even more and better than I did, for he was a very good Catechist as well as an excellent Curé. Monseigneur Tentrier, since Bishop of Beauvais; Monseigneur Mathieu, now Cardinal and Archbishop of Besançon, were also Curés of this parish, and most zealously encouraged the work of the Catechisms (I am pleased, having the opportunity, to bear this testimony to them). Well, the many children who came there from all parts, from remote countries—for the revolutions, specially in 1830, 1831, and 1832, had brought these children from Italy, from Poland, from Germany, from Portugal, from Spain, from Brazil even—poor children, rich, and even royal children;[1] children who, coming to the Catechism, came out of the most miserable quarters of Paris, or from the most brilliant dwellings of the rich; children moreover whose parents belonged to all the most contrary shades of political parties which then divided France; well—all had but one heart and one soul,[2] all these differences, all these divisions disappeared; all these children, gathered together in their Chapel of S. Hyacinthe, filled with the same thoughts and the same desires, sharing in the same instructions, the same *fêtes*, preparing together for the same great action; their young souls, seeing around them other souls who were truly their brethren, unfolding in the same light and receiving the same dew of heaven, did really form a family, *sui generis*, having its own life, its close ties; every heart beat with the same feelings, the same love, with that elevation of heart which religion only can give; yes, it was indeed a Christian family.

[1] We had the honour of seeing the young Queen of Portugal, Dona Marie, following the Catechisms assiduously with her mother-in-law, the Empress of Brazil; her Royal Highness the Princess Clémentine, now Duchess of Saxe-Coburg, also came to them sometimes; the pious Queen Marie-Amélie, and her worthy daughter, the Queen of the Belgians, and the Princess Marie, were nearly always present at our First Communions.

[2] The most celebrated names on both sides were there; it may suffice to mention General Foy, M. de Villèle, M. Casimir Périer, and M. de Polignac.

And they all felt it, they sang of it; they felt at home there, as under their father's roof, in a secure and quiet refuge, sheltered under the wings of God, hidden in His sanctuary as in His very heart; sometimes amidst showers of blessing, and enjoying more real happiness than among any worldly pleasures; and they expressed this feeling in simple and true hymns, and in touching prayers, led on by an enthusiasm which not one of them has ever forgotten; and those who were witnesses of the emotion of all these hearts, of the sublime peace of these souls, those who heard these accents of ardent faith and love and pure joy, were themselves touched and charmed by it.

But none more so than their own parents, it must be said; for when the Catechism is what it ought to be, it attracts and charms the parents themselves, not less than the children. The father loves to be there near his son, the mother near her daughter, and with these happy children, to take their part in the joys and blessings of the Catechism.

Yes, I have seen this, gentlemen; I have, at La Madeleine, seen parents come in such numbers to the Catechism, that besides numerous places which had been reserved for them on both sides of the sanctuary, and at the bottom of the S. Hyacinthe Chapel, a large gallery had to be erected to provide more places, and that even was not enough.

And what interest they took in all parts of the Catechism! And what real joy to their heart, and above all what grace, and sometimes what conversions resulted from it!

The truth is, that a stranger would be interested in the charming happiness of the children at a Catechism. What then for the parents! A sort of powerful and sweet charm brings them there and keeps them there, and a double influence which they cannot resist works upon them. At the same time that they see their children so thoroughly happy, so truly enjoying themselves, they are also witnesses of the secret and admirable work of grace in these young souls, and of the wonderful changes which it sometimes makes; and this double spectacle of pure happiness and of inward transformation impresses and charms them unawares. And seeing

what Religion does for their children, an unexpected revelation, an overpowering impression takes hold of them and conquers them; and under the angelic form of a beloved daughter, or of a son again become good and loving, they recognize the Lord Himself, and adore the eternal Love which is thus so beautifully revealed to them, and shown with such touching features.

How many parents have been thus won again to God by their children, by means of the Catechism! How often I have been granted to see it myself! I may even say that not a year passed without children, rich as well as poor, bringing me either their father, or their mother, who had unhappily forgotten their religious duties, or who even, living in the disastrous times of revolutions, had not yet made their first Communion! At that time, this was an evil very frequently met with. They came then, either of their own accord, irresistibly touched by the lessons of the Catechism, or else persuaded by the holy zeal of their children, who by their prayers and tears won them over to return. The times of preparation for the first Communion were above all fruitful in blessings of this kind, for then the more evident joy of the children, their increasingly touching openness and innocence, their more earnest prayers, often won for them the great comfort of seeing their parents accompany them to the Holy Table, to which they had been long strangers. I can see now these touching scenes; even now I see, on the steps of our sanctuary, a young girl bringing me her mother, well advanced in years, whom she held by the hand, the mother keeping a little behind, while the daughter, with an indescribable tone of simple happiness, said to me, "It is my mother, sir, she herself wished me to bring her, she wants to make her first Communion with me."

But it is not only parents who are influenced by the Catechism, gentlemen; I have seen men of the world, worldly women, high and great personages, laid hold of, conquered, overcome by the sight of a Catechism, by these holy hymns, by the voices, by the souls of these little children.

You will tell me, perhaps, this is difficult to understand, for that after all these hymns are very indifferent poetry. Not always, gentlemen; among these hymns there are some that Racine would not have been ashamed of, there are even some of his; but whatever they were, they were sung with such an enthusiasm, with such expression, with that deep and powerful expression which only the pure feeling for heavenly things gives to the soul;[1] and I have seen the irreligious subdued, conquered by the irresistible power of these holy songs. And observe, too, gentlemen, I am speaking of times which were not favourable to religion; it was the time when the Archbishop's palace was pillaged, when crosses were thrown down, when Priests were publicly insulted in the streets of Paris.

I can see now one of these men, who had had the curiosity and the patience to remain throughout the whole two hours of the Catechism, and who at the end said to me with a tone of great emotion, "It is really wonderful that you can thus keep together all this little audience; it is a strange secret—to be able to keep four hundred children, for two hours, quiet, motionless, and happy."

He understood nothing about it, and I saw that he did not.

I replied to him, "Ah, sir, it is true; you have seen it, these two hours have passed like one minute; but believe me, it is God Who has done it; if He were not with us in this Chapel, we should not succeed in this; and it seems to me that you yourself have been interested."—"Yes," he said, "it has singularly touched me, and I shall come to it again, if you will allow me."

I remember also a Priest, a great preacher, but a stranger to the work of the Catechisms; he had come there to see what was going on. When it was over, he could not contain the emotion he had felt, and he said to me, "I thought I saw the sanctifying Spirit Himself hovering under the vaults of this

[1] I have no hesitation in saying that through this, a harmony, a musical perfection is attained, which I have never met with elsewhere.

Chapel, over these dear children." I did not refuse this praise —it was true. It was on the Monday evening of the Retreat for the first Communion; they had sung the hymn "*Hélas, quelle douleur!*" It was this hymn specially which had so thrilled the heart of this Priest, and I had been as much moved by it as himself.

But enough. In our next discourse we will go yet more into the bottom of all these things.

SEVENTH DISCOURSE.

THE FESTIVALS OF THE CATECHISM.

All these emotions, strong and deep in the heart as they always were, glowed yet more brightly on the festival-days.

The festivals of a Catechism, gentlemen, more than anything else, attract the children to it, and make them love it; they are perhaps the chief means for bringing into it *home* joys, of really making it a family; and by describing one of these *fêtes* to you, I shall be able to give you a more lively picture of what I am now trying to explain to you.

In the same way, then, that a family has its festivals, that Religion has them, that a parish has them, so the Catechism also has its own.

What, gentlemen, are the festivals of a parish? what is this admirable liturgical year? You know well, and I am not afraid to repeat it, that it is one of the most beautiful institutions of the Church. There is nothing more beautiful, nothing more captivating.

It is all a poem, a sublime poem, the great Christian poem, that which God Himself conceived in His thought, and executed by His power.

The whole of Christianity is there; all the mysteries, all the divine actions, all gospel teaching, everything which enlightens souls and sanctifies them; and all this grouped round the Sacrifice, the centre and the soul of all Catholic worship; all shown and celebrated in the hymns, the psalms, and the canticles, and in the teachings which accompany every festival by the mouth of the Priest; without any doubt, it is one of

the grandest inspirations of the Spirit of God, and perhaps has a more powerful influence over souls than one can even imagine.

I repeat, in the large acceptation of the word it is a poem, a Divine poem, acting on the mind and heart of man more than any human poetry, and with sovereign power and sweetness entering into his life.

Well, all the festivals of the liturgical year, or at all events the most beautiful and the most solemn, are to be found at the Catechism, and are there celebrated; they are brought within reach of the children, they are proportioned to their age, to their character, to their tastes, and their imagination, to their *ideal*, if I may so express myself; and this, too, with a kind of sweet *friendliness*, which makes them like home and family festivals, and thus takes possession of the children with a charm all its own.

I said that the festivals of the Catechism are the same as the liturgical, the parish festivals. I do not mean to say that a Catechism has not its own little festivals with their own special mark; but even these, in reality, and by reason of the spirit which animates them, will be found to be in harmony with those of the parish.

I.

THE first of these fête-days, as it were the prelude to this sacred poem, is the *Opening* of the Catechism. Nothing is more conformable to Christian feeling, to the spirit of the Gospel, and to the love of the Church for souls, than by a little festival to celebrate the return of the children.

I remember it still; when after many months of separation the holy home was again opened to them, and on returning to the Chapel they found it splendidly adorned to receive them, and the image of Mary their Mother shining in the midst of lights and flowers, and their Catechists there, glad to greet them; how then their soul was moved, and with what earnestness they sang the holy *cantique* which I am going to give you; and how deeply the feelings expressed by the words entered

into their hearts, and gave them at once the meaning and the inspiration of the festival!

"Salut, aimable et cher asile,
Où Dieu même instruit ses enfants;
Où des beautés de l'Evangile
Il charme leurs cœurs innocents!"

After this stanza, loudly sung by all, the choir came in again softly:

"Ici la foi de ses images,
Semble à nos yeux se dégager;
Ici nos cœurs sont moins volages,
Et le saint joug est plus léger."

Then all, with an enthusiasm which could be heard in their voices, and which sparkled in their eyes, joined again in the stanza of refrain:

"Salut, aimable et cher asile," &c.

In the two couplets which followed, the children were reminded of all the good things, all the pleasures of the Catechism; the emulation of pious examples, the sweetness of the holy prayers, the dew of God's grace:

"Ici par sa force secrète,
L'exemple soutient nos travaux:
Tels on voit braver la tempête,
En s'unissant les arbrisseaux.

"Dans ton sein, ô doux sanctuaire,
Pour moi le ciel a plus d'attraits;
Plus vive y monte ma prière,
Plus prompts descendent tes bienfaits."

And then, their hearts more and more touched and charmed by these bright and pleasant images, they all repeated with fresh energy:

"Salut, aimable et cher asile," &c.

And you will observe, gentlemen, that the last stanza sums up all, and with sweet and deep feeling expresses the same idea that I am here drawing out, namely, that the Catechism is really a family, the family of God's children:

"Rassemble et la mère et la fille,
Le fils, le père, ô doux séjour;
Et, du Seigneur chère famille,
Vivons tous de son pur amour."

This important idea constantly recurs in the *cantiques;* I find it admirably expressed in these charming verses:

"Ta parole est, Seigneur, plus douce à mon oreille,
Que l'instrument le plus flatteur;
Ta parole est pour moi ce qu' à la jeune abeille
Est le suc de la tendre fleur.
Trois fois heureuse la famille,
Fidèle aux lois que tu prescris,
Où la mère en instruit sa fille,
Où le père en charme son fils!"

And again in this verse:

"Je n'ai formé qu'un vœu, que mon Dieu l'accomplisse,
Puisse-je au pieds de ses autels,
Fidèle adorateur, passer à son service
Le reste de mes jours mortels.
Que sa demeure me soit chère,
Qu'elle plaise à mon cœur épris,
Comme la maison d'un bon père
Au cœur reconnaissant d'un bon fils."

The *cantique* from which I have taken these two stanzas is throughout full of poetry, such as Racine himself would not have been ashamed of.

After the sweet and simple *cantique* which I have quoted to you, and which described their Chapel to the children as a lovable home, a dear sanctuary chosen by God, they sang another in which all the joys and happiness of this little family calling itself a Catechism, were expressed alike with touching and charming feeling; this *cantique*, gentlemen, is from the pen of M. Borderies, and was composed in 1803 for the opening of the Catechism of S. Thomas Aquinas:

"Que je me plais dans ton enceinte,
Lieu sacré, fortuné séjour,
Où Dieu m'instruit de sa loi sainte,
Et grave en mon cœur son amour!

École où Jésus à l'enfance
Revèle ses plus hauts secrets !
Saint asile, où mon innocence
Brave le vice et ses attraits ! "

Truly all I have said, gentlemen, is here expressed, protection from outside dangers, as under a family roof; the charm of these holy meetings; the sublime word of the Gospel, "Thou hast revealed them unto babes;" *the air purer, Heaven more open, God more near!*

The initiation into the Divine mysteries, the truths of the faith deeply penetrating the souls, the lifting of the heart to God in prayer, the invisible transformation of the life, and the germ of virtues springing up in the heart, all these were sung in the verses which followed, and the language is at once easy and yet noble, grand and tender; above all, gentlemen, I would have you note the last words, and the happy, bright thought, so winning, and so likely to touch the heart of the children and their mothers:

"De mes parents si, plus docile,
Sans murmurer j'entends la voix,
C'est à tes leçons, cher asile,
A tes conseils que je le dois ! "

Then with all the bright enthusiasm of the first love of God, the children cast all worldly attractions far away from them, and sang with wonderful expression of all those pure joys of which they had already tasted the first-fruits in the Catechism:

"Monde, ne vante plus tes charmes !
Tu n'enflammes pas mes désirs—
Quels dégoûts, quelles tristes larmes
Payent tes coupables plaisirs !
Ici, pres de Dieu, mon enfance
Des vrais biens goûte la douceur :
Les plaisirs purs de l'innocence
Peuvent seuls donner le bonheur ! "

Yes, happiness was there, because innocence was there, or at least it was very near, and ready to come back to these hearts, in which a disgust for evil enjoyments and for false pleasures had already been inspired by these pious songs.

The two *cantiques* which I have had the pleasure of quoting to you, gentlemen, were composed by two men who had received from God a marvellous gift for the ministry of childhood, and I do not hesitate to say, a providential mission in the beginning of this century for restoring among us the work of the Catechisms. The author of the first was M. de Tourneur, afterwards Bishop of Verdun; the other, as I have said, M. Borderies, afterwards Bishop of Versailles; both Catechists at S. Thomas Aquinas, and emulating each other in zeal and success in the work for which they had evidently been raised up by God.

The truth is, gentlemen, that when, at the beginning of this century, France was emerging from the tempests of the revolution, there arose a *necessity* for winning souls anew, a desire to recover from impiety the lost ground, and this inspired the holy Priests of the time with a fervour of zeal, an evangelical fire, such as had hardly been known in the eighteenth century, and which perhaps at no time had shone in an equal degree, at least not for the work of the Catechisms, not even in the seventeenth century. In this time of profound peace, when faith was universal, zeal was, as it were, at rest, in entire security; there was perhaps more of grandeur, but the flame was not so bright, there was slumber in this peace; the hollow sound of impiety which some, Fénélon amongst others, heard in the distance, was not threatening very nearly, it had not yet destroyed souls; but when the storm had burst, when in this whirlwind souls were seen as it were borne away from the sanctuary, hunted on all sides by the tempest, *atrâ seu tempestate columbæ;* then it was felt that there was no hope, if prodigious efforts were not made to save them, and that to bring them back to the temple, to shelter them again under the wing of the altars, they must be sought, must be touched and taken possession of, by a zeal which was as great as the misery of the times. Well, the Spirit of God inspired this zeal, and in the Church of France raised up admirable Catechists, among others those of whom I have just spoken.

In these men there was an extraordinary fire of zeal, fanned by God Himself; it was an entirely new inspiration, truly

apostolic, and urged on as far as possible by the largest Christian feeling.

I said, gentlemen, that in this real family which calls itself a Catechism, together with joys there are also sorrows to be met with, which are felt and shared by all.

One of these sorrows, on the very threshold of this dear home, mingling itself with the gladness of the return-festival, was this: all had not returned! some were faithless, and when the anxious Catechist—*Res est solliciti plena timoris amor*—sought them in the place they had occupied the year before, he found them there no more! Well, in a family, absent brothers, those who no longer take part in the home joys, are regretted, are mourned for; and so it is in the Catechism; this may be seen best in an admirable *cantique* composed by M. Borderies in 1804. I do not know that Racine himself has ever composed one more beautiful. Read it; I want to point out to you, even more than the poetry and its literary beauty, the accent of zeal, the cry of the heart:

"Grand Dieu! tous ces enfants formés à ton école,
Qui naguère avec nous partageaient tes leçons,
Que tu deignas nourrir du pain de ta parole,
Hélas! en vain nous les cherchons!

"Qu'a servi du pasteur la tendresse attentive?
Malheureux! il n'a pu les fixer sous ses lois;
Il les appelle en vain; leur troupe fugitive
Ne veut plus entendre sa voix.

"Ingrats! souvenez-vous de ce jour mémorable,
Qui nous vit tous ensemble, autour du même autel,
A ce Dieu qui daignait nous admettre à sa table,
Promettre un amour éternel.

"Comme nous à ses pieds, les yeux baignés de larmes,
Vous juriez que toujours vous seriez ses enfants,
Que ses leçons pour vous auraient toujours des charmes;
Où sont vos pleurs et vos serments?"

What feeling there is here, gentlemen! and how it comes from the depth of the heart! But the verse which ends the *cantique*, this appeal from the Catechist to those he sees not,

but whom his heart still sees, for whom he seems to be searching in the distance; there is something in this, gentlemen, which bears no comment, yet read it:

"Revenez parmi nous! vous ne pouvez attendre
En ce monde, où déja se portent vos désirs,
Ni de bonheur plus pur, ni d'amitié plus tendre,
Ni de plus innocents plaisirs!"

We made use of this admirable *cantique*, and with success, even outside the Catechism, and in this way we induced the children themselves to go to the homes of those who had not returned. We said to them, "Go and find them, and read them this *cantique*, which speaks of them;" and they went, with book in hand, showed them the *cantique*, and said, "See, you did not come back to the Catechism; you have been spoken of there, we have sung this *cantique*, you *must* come back." We did that, gentlemen; and every year I have seen many children thus brought back to the Catechism by their companions. The girls in particular were most touchingly zealous about it.

We also did ourselves what we advised the children, and I remember that the first year of my stay at La Madeleine, the custom of returning to the Catechism of Perseverance not having yet taken root, many children failed me at the first gatherings. I went myself to their homes, I spoke to the parents and to the children; the parents were touched by this, and so were the children; and the next Sunday, without its having cost me much trouble, I had the pleasure of seeing nearly all of them again.

All hearts being thus moved by these joys and these sorrows, by these lamentations and longings, and by everything which the Catechist could say to enhance the emotion of this happy return, he then offered and consecrated them solemnly to the Blessed Virgin, by a prayer in which the same idea which filled all these young hearts, the idea of the Catechism being a family, the family of the Lord, occurs again; it is the one idea:

"Holy Virgin, we offer to thee the beginning and the first-

fruits of this Catechism with all the love and all the tenderness of which our hearts are capable. Deign to look down in thy goodness on this numerous family of Christian children, who have come joyfully to this holy home to receive the Divine teachings of religion. We offer to thee," &c.

Thus ended this first meeting, thus the idea of the family entered deeply into the hearts of the children, and as such did the Catechism appear to them, from first to last.

II.

Such then was the re-opening of the Catechism, and the first meeting; it was as the prelude to this living and true poem, of which the festivals which succeeded each other from time to time were as different cantos. It may even be said that every single festival was a distinct and complete poem. First came the feast of All Saints, speaking to the children of heaven; then the feast of the dedication, which inspired them with the love of the Church. Soon after came the two patronal feasts of the Catechism: the feast of the Immaculate Conception, and the feast of the Holy Childhood. These two, gentlemen, require some details.

The feast of the Immaculate Conception, what delightful recollections it brings back to me! I can see still how and with what care we adorned the Chapel, the decoration of which always pictured to the children some venerated sanctuary of Mary, either S. Marie-Majeure at Rome, or Notre-Dame at Loretto. We opened the festival by the *cantique*, "*Quel beau jour vient s'offrir*," &c. For each feast had its own *cantique*, showing at once the idea and the end of the festival.

Every meeting of the Catechism, in fact, and more particularly every festival, has one object to which everything should bear reference. There is no "beating the air" there, nothing is in vain; and in this way the most beautiful poetry becomes most real truth; the festivals are not mere spectacles for the eyes and ears, but they have a powerful action upon souls. In this Catechism life, gentlemen, it may be said that the most sublime ideal has become a most living reality.

The festival then, was opened by singing:

"'Quel beau jour vient s'offrir à notre âme ravie ?
Nous inspirer des chants joyeux !
Les temps sont accomplis : Dieu prépare en Marie
L'accord de la terre et des cieux.
Cette terre ingrate et rebelle
Du ciel provoquait le courroux :
Vierge humble, modeste et fidèle,
C'est toi qui vas nous sauver tous.'"

Puis le refrain pour tous :

"Chantons cette fête chérie,
Ce jour de grâce et de bonheur,
Et que le doux nom de Marie
Règne à jamais dans notre cœur !"

The festival, having been thus announced, in the following verses the meaning and the beauty of it were explained, and it was sung quite through; and as I am on this subject, gentlemen, I will say that nearly always the *cantiques* should be sung throughout, without curtailing them; this is a great principle.

In the last verse, the idea of the family comes in again:

"O Divine Marie ! *ô notre tendre Mère !*
Daignez nous bénir en ce jour !
Songez que *cet asile* est *votre sanctuaire*
Qu'il a des droits à votre amour.
A cette famille attendrie
Inspirez toujours la ferveur,
Et qu'au ciel, comme en cette vie,
Nous soyons tous en votre cœur !"

After the *cantique*, the *Billets* were repeated: the *Billets*, gentlemen, are an admirable institution which we owe, as you know, to a Catechist of another time, Père Romillon. On their names being called by the Catechist, certain children, chosen out from the most intelligent and the best-behaved, stood up one after another, and in a clear voice explained to the other children the whole meaning of the festival; the questions which follow are those to which they answered in the *Billets* belonging to this festival:

1st *Billet.* What mystery does the Church call you to honour to-day?

2nd. Why do you believe that Jesus Christ granted to Mary the grace and privilege of a conception without stain?

3rd. Does it not appear to you that the Son of God owed it also to Himself to grant to His Mother this privilege?

4th. Has the Church made the Immaculate Conception a dogma of faith?

You see what detailed instruction was given to the children by means of these *Billets*, and by the mouth of the children themselves. The last *Billets* had always a practical purpose:

5th *Billet.* This festival which you are celebrating: with what feelings does it inspire you?

6th. What resolution do you propose to make on this day?

In the answer to the 5th *Billet*, gentlemen, which I will give you at full length, so that you will be able to judge of the others, you will see how the children expressed these feelings:

"It is on this day," they said, "that under the auspices of the best and the tenderest of mothers, we love to celebrate *the happiness of our return to this dear home:* we left it with tears, and our heart bounded with delight when we heard the happy news that very soon we were to return to enjoy the peace and the pure joys of the house of the Lord. Then too *with what filial joy we assemble round this beloved Altar!* What delight to our eyes and our hearts to contemplate this sacred image of Mary, raised up on this throne of grace and love, *from whence she seems to preside at our feasts!* And after having sung her glory, proclaimed her benefits, and celebrated her virtues, with what confidence do we again throw ourselves *into her maternal arms*, to invoke her tenderness, and with an ever new rapture of happiness and love, repeat again to her those touching words which will move her heart:

"'O Divine Marie! ô notre tendre Mère!
Daignez nous bénir en ce jour!
Songez que cette asile est votre sanctuaire,
Qu'il a des droits à votre amour!'" &c.

And I repeat, gentlemen, that in all this there was nothing feigned, nothing fanciful or unreal; all these emotions were sincere; it was all true, true in the mind, true in the heart of the children and of the Catechists.

The festival was concluded in the evening by a solemn consecration to the Blessed Virgin. The Communion in the morning had admirably prepared for it. A form of consecration was read aloud by one of the children, and all repeated it heartily; a basket of flowers, the symbol both of the virtues of the Mother of God and the piety of her children, was placed on the Altar, and then they all sang this beautiful *cantique:*

"Anges, soyez témoins de ma promesse!
Cieux, écoutez ce serment solennel!
Oui, c'en est fait: mon cœur plein de tendresse
Jure à Marie un amour éternel.
Tendre Marie,
O mon bonheur!
Toujours chérie
Tu vivras dans mon cœur."

The last verse was most touching:

"Si je devais infidèle et volage,
Un seul moment cesser de te chérir,
Tranche mes jours, à la fleur de mon âge,
Je t'en conjure, ah! laisse-moi mourir . . . ."

Thus ended the festival, and the children went joyfully away, with the love of Mary and the Catechism in their heart; and they had but one thought, that every Sunday they should be in this Chapel where they had just been so happy. In fact, gentlemen, many families fixed this feast of the Immaculate Conception as the date of their return from the country; and I have even known children, who could not yet come back to reside in Paris, make a long journey, on purpose to be present at the Catechism; and go away again, very soon to return.

The festival of the Holy Childhood was kept a little later, some time after Christmas. We owe it to M. Borderies. It was he who in France was the great promoter of the devotion towards the Holy Child Jesus; not to the Infant of the cradle, that devotion is as old as the Church, but to the Child of

twelve years,—the age of the Catechism children,—*factus annorum duodecim;* to the Child of the Temple, in the midst of the doctors. M. Borderies even composed charming *cantiques* for this festival. The remembrance of the cradle was there too, but the picture of Jesus amidst the doctors was the prominent idea. A few extracts from these *cantiques*, gentlemen, will enable you to judge of the spirit of this festival, which was so attractive and also so full of useful teaching for the children.

The following *cantique* was devoted to the recollections of the cradle:

"Chantons l'enfance
De notre doux Sauveur,
Son innocence,
Son aimable candeur:
Que d'autres du Seigneur
Célèbrent la grandeur,
Qu'ils chantant sa puissance;
Nous, enfants, du Sauveur
Chantons l'enfance.

"Près de sa crèche,
O mon cœur, instruis-toi;
C'est moi qui pèche;
Un Dieu souffre pour moi!
Je cherchais les douceurs;
Jésus est dans les pleurs!
Ah! j'entends ce qu'il prêche!
J'abjure mes erreurs
Près de sa crèche."

We meet with the same thoughts again in the verse of another *cantique:*

"Au saint berceau,
Ah! puisse l'innocence
Chercher toujours son appui, son flambeau,
Près l'enfant-Dieu prolonger notre enfance,
Et tous les ans trouver plaisir nouveau
Au saint berceau."

But the *cantique* speaks chiefly of the Child of twelve years: *factus annorum duodecim:*

"Jésus enfant
Dans sa retraite obscure,
Grandit caché, docile, obéissant," &c.

And again another from M. Borderies:

"Enfant, notre Dieu, notre roi,
O Jésus! qui dans cet asile,
Vois à tes pieds une troupe docile
D'enfants heureux de marcher sous ta loi

Permets que leur reconnaissance
Dans ses chants célèbre en ce jour,
Les premiers soins de ton divin amour
Et les bienfaits de ton enfance."

The *Billets* were as follows:

1. What festival are you celebrating with so much solemnity?

2. Why is the Holy Childhood chosen for the first festival of the Catechism?

3. What virtues of the Holy Childhood do you mean to imitate?

4. How does the example of the Child Jesus show you to-day the value of obedience?

5. Does not the hidden life of Jesus at Nazareth inspire you with a love of humility and of labour?

6. What thoughts ought we to carry away from this festival?

These questions alone, gentlemen, are quite sufficient to show you how complete and how persuasive the instruction could be, under this form and with this detail, and how effective the whole thing was for implanting piety and love for the Catechism in the children's hearts.

But I have said nothing to you yet, gentlemen, of what was the great delight and the greatest charm of this festival, in the Catechisms of Perseverance: I mean the Communion; the Communion which, recurring with the festivals, in these Catechisms took place periodically nearly every month, always eagerly looked forward to; the Communion, which I call the life and soul of a Catechism of Perseverance, if it is true that there we endeavour to hold and to strengthen the children in the Christian life, and in the faithful practice of religion as well as in the knowledge of it.

There were six or seven monthly Communions every year, while the Catechisms lasted. They were not compulsory; on those days only those communicated who desired it, and were well prepared; but there was always a great number. Even those who had not that happiness, loved at least to witness the happiness of their friends, and

they were thus preparing to be fit themselves for the next Communion.

The feast of the Holy Childhood, then, had, like all the other festivals, two specially solemn times, two great gatherings, one in the morning for the Communion, the other in the evening for the Consecration. Each had its own features, its special character. In the morning it was heavenly. They came there, having received absolution the evening before, peace in their soul, tender and thoughtful. It was scarcely daylight. The mysterious dimness of the Chapel, at that hour and season, was a further aid to recollection and to tenderness of feeling. Nothing loud or noisy; everything was calm, sweet and peaceable; the festival was all in the heart. A well-known and delicious *cantique*, full of ardour and holy desires (Fénélon is the author, and he has thrown his soul into it), sustained their hearts in most loving expectation, up to the moment of Communion: they sang to a soft and touching air:

"Mon bien-aimé ne paraît pas encore!
Trop longue nuit, dureras-tu toujours?
Tardive aurore,
Hâte ton cours!
Rends-moi, Jésus, ma joie et mes amours.
O jour heureux, quand te verrai-je éclore!

De ton flambeau déjà les étincelles,
Astre du jour, font tressaillir mon cœur.
Oui, tu m'appelles,
O mon Sauveur!
Servez mes vœux, avancez mon bonheur,
Anges du Ciel, portez-moi sur vos ailes!"

And the happy moment having at last arrived, they communicated; we saw them as they came near, looking somewhat agitated and blushing both from timidity and fervour, their heart beating, and often tears in their eyes; and then all was silent for some time. Then there was the sweet possession of the Saviour, the peaceful union, secret tears, fervent prayers, calm happiness: these happy children had tasted of God, and after some moments of silence, their overcharged hearts found vent in the beautiful *cantique:*

"Qu'ils sont aimés, grand Dieu, tes tabernacles!
Qu'ils sont aimés et chéris de mon cœur! . . .

Qu'il est heureux celui qui le contemple,
Et qui soupire au pied de tes autels!
Un seul moment qu'on passe dans ton temple
Vaut mieux qu'un siècle aux palais des mortels?
Je nage au sein des plus pures délices,
Le Ciel entier, le Ciel est dans mon cœur.
Dieu de bonté, de faibles sacrifices
Méritaient-ils cet excès de bonheur!"

And then they went away, carrying Jesus Christ in their heart, more pure, more lovable, more happy, full of thoughtfulness and joy. Such was the morning. The evening had quite another character. It was splendid, brilliant with music, with light and flowers; joy filled all hearts. In the morning, in their inmost soul they had given a feast to our Lord; in the evening He gave it to them again, bright, beautiful, and glorious. Everything was arranged to provide all possible splendour for the festival; the Chapel was better adorned, the altar magnificently decorated; the singing more bright and joyous; often some person of distinction, a Bishop perhaps, would come to add more lustre and more joy by his presence and his words: all ended by a *salut* of the Holy Sacrament; by a solemn benediction of the Saviour Jesus on all these children, gathered around Him, as round a father, like a family holding festival; and lastly by the act of Consecration.

Such were the festivals. Thus it was that the Catechism exercised such power over these young hearts, so entered into their life, and was such an essential part of their happiness, that they preferred it to walks, to parties of pleasure, to everything. "I had rather go to the Catechism," they said; and if on account of health or for any other reason they were obliged even once to be absent, there was great sorrowing and tears.

And I have said nothing to you yet of that which is of all others *the* festival of a Catechism, that which is really the heart and soul of this family, that which makes the tie so lasting, the remembrance so undying,—the first Communion!

I hope very soon to speak of this with great detail. I will only now say one thing about it; I have never seen the termination of the Catechism of the first Communion, though it had hardly lasted two months, I have never been present at this last and final gathering, without being witness of the greatest sorrow and grief, so much so that there was not a child who was not in tears, or bursting with sobs, above all when the *cantique* of *Adieu*, itself composed by a child of the Catechism, was sung to a touching and well-known air of M. de Chateaubriand, "*Combien j'ai douce souvenance!*" Try, gentlemen, to sing it by yourselves at home, to this air, and I shall be very much surprised if you can finish it without finding tears in your eyes.

"Dieu qui formas nos cœurs dociles,
Toi qui dans ces pieux asiles
Nous a longtemps donné des jours
Tranquilles,
Laisse-nous ton divin secours,
Toujours!

"Nous te quittons, douce patrie,
Lieu sacré, retraite chérie,
Au seuil de ce monde, où la foi
S'oublie.
Qui peut s'éloigner sans effroi
De toi?

"Pasteurs, dont la main protectrice
Nous dirigeait dans la justice,
Ecartant les dangers naissants
Du vice,
Priez encore pour vos enfants
Absents.

"En ce temple, où du divin Maître
La douce loi se fit connaître,
Que de nous dois revenir
Peut-être.
Et touchés d'un saint repentir,
Gémir!

"Adieu donc, retraite pieuse,
Où notre enfance vertueuse

Croissait à l'ombre du Seigneur,
Joyeuse,
Avec la paix et le bonheur
Du cœur.

" Lorsqu'ici dans l'Eucharistie,
Nous reçûmes le pain de vie,
Notre âme, à ton souffle de feu
Ravie,
Se crut au parvis du Saint-lieu,
Mon Dieu ! "

I must stop, gentlemen, for if I were to say all, I should never have finished, and besides, as we proceed with these discourses, I shall have the opportunity of going with you into all the other details, which will best enlighten, and also charm you.

EIGHTH DISCOURSE.

THE CATECHISTS: PATERNAL AND MATERNAL LOVE.

I.

Out of the Catechism, then, a family may be formed; it has been done, it is continually done, and at this moment, gentlemen, there are a multitude of Catechisms, in France, and specially in Paris and in our best dioceses, where all I have told you of is realized.

But how is all this done, and how can it be done?

The answer, gentlemen, is easy; it is the love, the charity of Jesus Christ which does all this.

I will say to you with S. Augustine, "Charity is a mother" (*caritas mater est*), "Charity is a nurse" (*caritas nutrix est*). Well, it is charity which brings this family into being, which brings it up, which takes care of it, which nourishes it; charity, in a word, is its mother and its nurse.

I will say to you with S. Paul: it is charity, it is love which inspires the shepherd of souls—be he simple Catechist or Curé—with those fatherly and motherly feelings and cares, with everything by which a family is formed: "*Tanquam nutrix, sicut pater.*"

It is S. Paul again who said what the simplest, most ordinary Catechist ought to be able to say, without fear of contradiction: "As little children who are dear to me in Jesus Christ, I have fed you with pure milk to nourish your souls." *Lac potum dedi vobis, tanquam parvulis in Christo* (1 Cor. iii. 1, 2). "For you still need to be nourished with milk." *Facti estis quibus lac opus sit* (Heb. v. 13).

And afterwards the same S. Paul, when his dear neophytes had advanced in the faith, gave them more solid nourishment, "strong meat" (*solido cibo*), but it was still his paternal love inspiring him to it.

Listen to S. Peter; he, the chief of the Apostles, the head Shepherd, he also, when bringing up souls for God, uses tender and motherly expressions: "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. *Sicut modo geniti infantes, sine dolo lac concupiscite.*"

Finally, hear S. John, the beloved disciple; see him, if I may so express myself, doing the work of the Catechism for children and for Christian youth, in those first years of the early Church; see his zeal and his tenderness for all, for the little children first, then for the young men:

"I have written unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. *Scribo vobis, infantes, quoniam cognovistis Patrem.*

"I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. *Scribo vobis, adoloscentes, quoniam vicistis malignum.*"

Also, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you. *Scribo vobis, juvenes, quoniam fortes estis, et Verbum Dei manet in vobis.*"

And he adds the touching words which I have already quoted, *Majorem non habeo gratiam*, &c., "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth."

Such were the Apostles; such were the feelings of a father and mother for their young neophytes which the love of Jesus Christ put into their heart; such is their pure and holy teaching. But now let them all be silent, and listen again and only to our Lord. You have seen this good Master "*accipiens parvulos, advocans, statuens secus se, complexans, benedicens, imponens manus.*" This is not all; listen to Him, see how He seeks out in nature the gentlest image, the strongest expression of maternal tenderness and care, to make us better understand what He was Himself, and what we must be to the children whom He confides to us: *Quoties volui congregare filios sub alis, sicut gallina congregat pullos suos sub alis!*

Who would ever, except God the Saviour, have thought of offering to us such a type of Himself, to make us understand His loving care?

This charming comparison, *sicut gallina*, has always deeply touched all priests with true, large-hearted souls, in the Church: Bossuet, following S. Augustine and S. François de Sales, has commented on them, and I am glad to be able to quote his words here.

See first with what delicacy and what exquisite truth this great Bishop expresses all the different feelings, all the tender anxieties with which the charity of Jesus Christ ought to inspire a Catechist.

"Charity," he says, "brings some into being, and strengthens others, she is careful to build up some, she fears to hurt others; she stoops to some, she rises against others; gentle to some, severe to others, but the enemy of none, so showing herself to be mother to all; she covers her young ones with her soft feathers; with an urgent voice she calls to those who murmur; she opposes herself to some, yet without being angry; severe, yet without hardness to these, gentle without weakness to those; she is pleased with the strong ones, but she leaves them that she may run to the help of the feeble ones; and those who are too proud to take shelter under her caressing wings, become food for birds of prey." *Ipsa caritas ad alios se inclinat, ad alios se erigit; aliis blanda, aliis severa; omnibus mater; languidulis plumis teneros fœtus operit.*

"Charity," Bossuet says again, "is not a savage bird which deafens you by its importunate cries, and which tears you with its claws; it is a dove which laments for you, and by the effort of a more than paternal compassion seeks to attract you by its lamentations." *Veni, columba te vocat, gemendo te vocat.*

Here, gentlemen, is admirably described what a Catechist ought to be, a mother bird, a dove; such are the emotions he ought to feel in his heart for the children whom our Lord has entrusted to him.

Bossuet, going yet further, adds, "I have learned from

S. Augustine that charity is a mother, that charity is a nurse. In fact we read in the Holy Scriptures that charity has children; she bears them in her womb, she carries them in her bosom, she feeds them with milk."

And see how this holy Bishop explains the supernatural and moral phenomenon which here meets us: "It is charity which thus transforms the guides of souls, and by inspiring them with maternal feelings, softens their dispositions. You know the great change which nature makes in any one, when she gives them children. Every one must have observed the extraordinary love which suddenly springs up in the hearts of mothers, and of nurses, who are like second mothers. Then it is that the sharpest or most indifferent dispositions become at once tender, and feel an anxiety and zeal hitherto unknown to them."

Well, gentlemen, not by way of astonishing you, but to make you really reflect upon it before God, I do not hesitate to say, that whoever among you has not at some time or other felt this hitherto unknown zeal, this deep thrill of a supernatural love for souls, who has not felt a new heart created in him by this mysterious infusion of fatherly and motherly sentiments in his soul, who has not felt the ineffable work of God, which is the most direct fruit of sacerdotal ordination, even that heavenly flame lighted all at once by the Spirit of Love: he is not a true Pastor! no, he has not received the transfiguration of Jesus Christ: he has the ineffaceable character of a priest, but he has not the spirit of it, he has not the virtue of it, he will produce nothing, he will bear no fruit, he will do no works.

Bossuet still further charmingly develops his subject. I should reproach myself if I did not give you his words; they will besides help you to understand the sort of transformation which ought to be wrought in you by the love of our Lord for those children entrusted to your care, what condescension of mind and heart, what flexibility even of voice, love, paternal love, ought to give you.

"Look," says Bossuet, "look at this mother and this nurse, or this father even, if you will; how, if I may so express

myself, he makes himself little, like his child. He comes from the Court where he has been pronouncing judgments, where he has made the Bar re-echo with the sound of his eloquence: now returned home, he would seem to you another man. That magnificent tone of voice has degenerated and changed to a lisping; this face, just now so grave, has suddenly put on the look of a child; a troop of children surrounds him, and he is delighted to give himself up to them; and they have such power with him, that he can refuse them nothing but what would hurt them."

"You knew it," Bossuet eloquently continues, "you knew it, O great Paul, you who so often came down from the third heaven as it were to lisp with the children. '*Facti sumus parvuli in media vestrûm.*' 'To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.'"

Certainly, gentlemen, after such words and such examples, I am right in repeating it: yes, it is the love, the charity of Jesus Christ which alone does everything here. It is that, that alone which can make a Catechist worthy of the name, or which of the Catechism can make a family. S. Augustine had already said it to you in that deep saying, "Love, love the children, and everything is gained, everything done." *Ama et fac quod vis.* No, there is no question here of having genius, not the least in the world do I demand in a Catechist a superior intellect; no, give me, if you have him, a man with good sense, for that is always necessary, and of an average intelligence; but a man who has a heart which knows how to love, how to devote itself, and with that he will work wonders.

II.

So you see, gentlemen, that the greatest men, the greatest geniuses, as well as the greatest saints, the disciples of the Lord as well as the Lord Himself, have but one voice; all tell you what love, what devotion, what affection we ought to have for children.

And in truth, gentlemen, is it so very difficult? What good Priest would not love childhood? After God, who on this earth shall we love, if not children? Children! but I shall never weary of repeating it, is there anything more charming, more attractive, more lovable? There is something always, in early childhood, so sweet and touching, that one cannot see it without being attracted and moved by it. Is there anything more delightful than an audience of children, who look at you as they listen, and in whose looks you can see all the transparency and simplicity of their souls? These tender souls, so simple, so confiding, opening to your words like the calix of a flower to the dew; their vivacity, their freshness, their ingenuousness, their candour, their innocence; and also their feebleness, their weakness, their smallness, their inexperience; the germ of the future which is there, the hopes which rest on these young heads; everything in children has an inexpressible, an irresistible charm, and very unfortunate is he who is not worthy to feel it.

By whom shall we be better or more faithfully loved? They have not as yet any secret interests to set them against us and our ministry; they have, very likely, in these sad times felt more or less that there are prejudices and accusations against us, but they have hardly taken notice of them. And if we are good Priests and they come to know us, then they feel at once that all that is not true; and that it is only their parents and ourselves who really love them, and count them for something in this world!

No, I do not wonder that our Lord loved children, that He blessed them, and that by these blessings and this love He willed for ever to imprint upon childhood a certain character of sacredness. I do not wonder that He Himself willed to be a little child, and to be clothed with all the graces of that age, so the more tenderly to touch and move our hearts.

I do not wonder that S. Paul said to the faithful that he had become as a little child amongst them, "*Parvuli in medio vestrûm.*" It was according to the example and the lesson of the Master; he literally carried out the great words, "*Nisi efficiamini sicut parvuli.*"

Thus, I repeat it, and I can never impress it too deeply in your hearts, this is the whole question. And our Lord asks no other question of those who aspire to fulfil this great ministry. *Amas Me?* "Lovest thou Me? Lovest thou My lambs?" You must be able to reply, "*Tu scis, Domine, quia amo Te*"; and then the Lord in His turn will be heard to say, "*Pasce agnos Meos.*"

And if twice or three times He repeats His question, "Lovest thou Me?" in sincerity of conscience and in tenderness of heart the reply of S. Peter must be ready, "*Domine,* TU OMNIA NOSTI, *Tu scis quia amo Te.*"

And at this third reply you will hear our Lord add, "*Pasce oves Meas,*" and you will then have received the benediction of the Chief Shepherd, of the Divine Catechist, the threefold benediction of love.

And then, gentlemen, what are not the joys and blessings of this ministry? You will love, and you will be loved; and that is everything! After having won their hearts, you will have won their souls! Thus it was that the youthful Augustine was won by S. Ambrose. "*I began to love him,*" says S. Augustine, "*not because of the truth he taught me, but because he showed me affection and good-will.*" Nothing more natural; but if that was true in the case of a young man, thirty years old, who had already been thrown among the dissipations and evil affections of the world, what will it be with children, and in a Catechism? No, I do not believe there is any ministry where the fruits can be more abundant and certain, for the very simple reason that no souls are so accessible as these souls of children; no natures more lively, more sensitive, more straightforward, more loving; in a word, more easy and certain to be won.

And is not this what the celebrated Chancellor Gerson experienced? He has told us himself that the example of our Lord, and the same words which we have been meditating on, determined him, in spite of censures, to devote himself with love to the work of catechising; and he has told us all the fruits of grace which his tender and affectionate love produced in these young hearts, and sometimes in very evil consciences.

"You reproach me," he says, "with speaking to the children with too much affability and kindness; you reproach me for being interested in their games, with taking part in their joys, with always receiving them with some expression of pleasure and happiness; but in all this am I not following the example of the Saviour? Certainly the actions of Jesus Christ are of great weight; there we find hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Well, it is the lessons of His Gospel, and the yet more powerful voice of His example, which have called me to the service of children, and have inspired me with love for childhood. No; it was a special arrangement of His ineffable providence that Jesus Christ severely rebuked His disciples when they prevented the children from coming to Him; and that, calling to Him these little children, He blessed them, laying His hands upon them, and embracing them. O good Jesus! when I see Thee stretching out Thine arms to press these little ones so tenderly to Thy breast, I am touched to the bottom of my soul. I would love those whom Thou so lovest, I would imitate Thy goodness, like Thee I would have for them the heart of a mother."

Gerson had been touched, as we have been, gentlemen, by the words of our Lord, "*Sicut gallina.*" "From Him I learn," he says, "to behave towards them as a hen towards her chickens; see how she watches over them with continual care, how tenderly she is always calling them, how she gathers them about her, how she protects them from their enemies, how she forgets her own nourishment in busying herself for their wants! This is the model which Jesus Christ sets before me, and am I to be only cold and indifferent towards these children?"

Moreover, Gerson's quite paternal tenderness for the children was well returned by a boundless confidence. His biographers tell us that he soon became confessor to all the children of Lyon. And he himself bears witness that the greater number, touched by his extreme kindness to them, opened to him all the wounds of their souls, and many owned to him that "never should they have dared to confess their sins to another Priest, who would not have been so gentle and

kind to them, not even had they been at the point of death." *Se nunquam peccata sua fuisse dicturos alteri non sic eis condescendenti . . . . instante etiam mortis articulo.*

The truth is that a Catechism well conducted, that is with love, like Gerson's, has an extraordinary power over these young souls, these childish consciences. They can hardly resist it. What I call the industries of zeal, in the Catechism (I will give it you in detail when I come to explain the whole method), these affectionate industries entwine them so powerfully; they move them, they work upon them in so many ways that the children can neither resist nor escape them; all these little hearts become tender; the infinite beauty of the Saviour, His goodness towards them reflected in the kindness of their Catechists, the holy songs, the festivals, the word of God incessantly heard; the charms of piety newly and ardently enjoyed, the good examples: all this wins the hardest, brings back those who have wandered furthest; and what is so comforting, one may say it is for always. Yes, when a child has been touched, laid hold of in the Catechism, through all his life he preserves the undying impression of it; when Jesus Christ has taken possession of a child's heart, He remains there; and if by the distractions of life or the outburst of the passions he is for a while led astray, yet at the bottom of his heart he has a something which will one day bring him back. A first Communion, well made, if it does not always mean perseverance, yet, sooner or later, it is salvation.

For all this, gentlemen, I do not say that effort and much trouble and patience and devotion are not necessary; no, I know indeed they are; but I do say that, the nature of a child being what it is, it is impossible that he will obstinately resist always Catechists who have in their heart the respect and tenderness of Jesus Christ for children; I say that they must never be disheartened, never be discouraged, never despair.

You believe, my dear Curé, that all the trouble you have taken with your Catechism is lost; that neither in the heart or mind of these children does there remain anything of what you have exhausted yourself in putting there; that all you do,

all you say, the *wind carries it away!* (I am using an expression I have heard). Well, you are mistaken; there is more in these souls than you think; the seed is there, and one day, at a given moment, it will germinate; or else, if it is as you say, and you have gained nothing, absolutely nothing, then it is for you seriously to examine your conscience before God, to see if you have done all that you could do, if you have had enough love, patience, and zeal, if you have well employed all the ingenuities of zeal, if you have used the right method; finally, if there is no way to do otherwise and better in the future; for it cannot be that with you only this most fertile mission of the Catechism should all at once become barren!

But it must be owned with shame and grief, often, nearly always, it is not method which is wanting, it is devotion and zeal; or perhaps there may be a certain devotion in a general way, in the gross (if you will allow me to use the expression), for a work which one knows well to rank highest in the Church of Jesus Christ, yet in detail, zeal and devotion are altogether wanting. Now, it is well known that in all great things, and above all in the Catechism, it is details which make perfection, and perfection alone does the work as it should be done.

But I ought to say also, for it is sometimes the truth, that the sensitiveness of self-love, a certain pride of heart which despises little things and neglects the ingenuities of zeal: sometimes suspicions among certain fellow-workers, sometimes the difficulty of agreeing with superiors or subordinates; the ambitious thoughts which fill the mind when there is what is called *talent;* in a word all the plagues of human nature often come to extinguish and stifle the best dispositions of the soul; and that love for children which alone can make a devoted Catechist, being weaker in his heart than self-love, the Catechist perishes, and the children perish with him.

I could enter here, gentlemen, into infinite details, and into a multitude of experiences, full of information and of sadness, on this important subject; I will confine myself to three special points, of which I will speak to you in our next discourse.

NINTH DISCOURSE.

THE CATECHISTS: SOME SPECIAL POINTS.

The special points on which I have to speak to you to-day, gentlemen, are perhaps the most important of all, those at least in which the most serious difficulties are often met with.

I wish to speak to you (1st) of the special character of that zeal which is to be useful; (2nd) of the necessity of a thorough agreement and subordination among the Catechists; (3rd) of the care to be bestowed on the details of discipline. Without going thoroughly into these three points and exhausting them, I shall yet say enough, I hope, to interest you, and inform you.

And first I will say, gentlemen, that zeal, to be useful, must be a holy zeal, a supernatural zeal, a persevering zeal. This is the definition which S. Bernard gives of zeal: "Let knowledge," he says, "direct your love, let charity inflame it, let perseverance sustain it," that it may be prudent, that it may be ardent, that it may be indefatigable.

Above all, it is never to be forgotten that it is to win souls who have been redeemed at the price of the blood of Jesus Christ; and that for such a work, piety, the spirit of grace and of prayer, are indispensable.

"Consider," said Fénélon, "consider the order of the gifts of God, and be careful not to disturb it. Grace alone can give love, and grace is only given to prayer. Pray then without ceasing; you recommend prayer to your children, and you, can you yourselves neglect it? You are for them a mediator between heaven and earth: pray then to help those of these poor children who already pray, join your prayers to theirs.

Pray above all for those who do not yet pray. Speak to God on behalf of those who do not know how to speak to Him. When you see them hardened and irritated by the demands of religion, be like Moses, the friend of God, go, before and after the Catechism, go up the mountain, speak familiarly to Him, face to face; then you will return to your children with new fire and an ardour which this ineffable communion will have imparted to your soul; and prayer will be the source of all your knowledge, the unction in all your labour!" "Oh," Fénélon writes again, "who will give us this spirit of prayer which has power over God Himself, and which gives the shepherd all he needs for his flock? O spirit of prayer, it is you who could make new apostles who would change the face of the earth! To pray without ceasing, to love God and to make others love Him, is the life of an Apostle." And this should be the life of a Catechist.

It is sometimes asked, how is it that in certain Catechisms everything seems to fail, notwithstanding the talents and cleverness and learning of the Catechists, while in others, which seem less favoured in these respects, everything succeeds and prospers? A number of strange reasons are found for this: the real reason is that the Catechism is not a matter of high intellect, but of fervent piety. How many Catechists, who have said a great deal throughout the course, have not once succeeded in touching the heart of their children, have never produced in these young souls the least movement of compunction or of the love of God! Let us do a little less, and pray more, let us become saints, and (as the *Method of the Catechisms of S. Sulpice* rightly says) nothing will be able to resist us.

This excellent book cites in support of all this the example of a celebrated Catechist, M. d'Argenteuil, whose name is still held in reverence at S. Sulpice. This holy Priest was not gifted with extraordinary talents, neither was his appearance attractive; but the grace of God was with him in everything, and it is universally acknowledged that perhaps never had children greater love for the Catechism, nor more zeal for piety, than they showed in his time. His least words, and

above all the penetrating tone of his voice, went straight to the heart. I have heard it said of the celebrated M. Teysseire that no one could have an idea of the effect he produced on the children, and even on the parents who heard him. In a retreat, they might be seen suddenly to fall on their knees, in tears, at the sight of the tears he shed himself when speaking of the small success of a preacher, although very talented. They could refuse him nothing, never were seen such plentiful alms, such perseverance on the part of the children in coming to the Catechisms, such a cordial unity amongst them. Every one came away from the Catechism enchanted with his clearness, his simplicity, his gentleness, his joyfulness. His charity was ingenious in suggesting to him a multitude of little devices for winning hearts; for instance, sometimes a new seal for the analyses, a gift all round of a new picture, some little pious practice, or a new hymn. His instructions were so clear, so interesting, so well divided, that the whole of them could be remembered. He prepared them in prayer, often on his knees, and with severe mortifications; thus God blessed all his words. (*Hist. des Catéchismes de S. Sulpice.*) You can easily understand, gentlemen, without my insisting on it, how pure, how supernatural must be this holy zeal for the salvation of souls.

No doubt you must love the children and make yourself loved by them; but I must say (with the *Méthode de S. Sulpice*) that Catechists cannot be too much on the watch against a certain natural love which is too often felt towards some children, on account either of their appearance, their birth, their fortune, or of a sympathy of disposition and character. This entirely human affection generally causes excessive attentions, and sometimes grievous partialities.

On this subject, an old Sulpicien guide-book gives two rules which it is very important to attend to. "The first, not to imitate those who, neither seeking God nor the salvation of souls, but seeking themselves, neglect the poor and concern themselves only with the rich, as making them a better return, and generally having more intelligence than the poor."

"The second rule is, not to neglect the rich on the pretence

of devoting oneself to the poor, as it happens sometimes in the case of young Catechists, who have much zeal and little experience; they think in doing so they are performing a great act of virtue, because they have heard it said that you must love the poor, that you must prefer them to the rich. But not having enough discretion to judge when and under what circumstances this conduct is praiseworthy, they do it without measure, and think nothing of offending the rich children and their parents."

La Méthode, with much prudence and experience, says further on this subject, that every one is conscious that there should be a great difference between the management of the Catechisms for girls and of the Catechisms for boys. For boys there should be a great amount of firmness, when they are addressed altogether, and great kindness when any one of them is spoken to separately. But on the other hand, with the girls, there should be great kindness when speaking to them all, but a great reserve when they are spoken to separately.

In everything, the spirit which ought to animate a Catechist, and still more the Head of the Catechism, is the spirit of gentleness combined with the spirit of kindness and firmness, the spirit of labour and of piety, the spirit of patience and of prayer.

And this, gentlemen, is all founded on the principle that love for children should be animated by a pure and supernatural zeal, which devotes us to their souls for the glory of God, and for their eternal happiness.

(2nd) Now, gentlemen, I will say a few words as to the agreement and necessary subordination among the Catechists.

A question at once arises here. But must there be several? Is not one Catechist sufficient? Must there always be several priests or seminarists employed in conducting a Catechism? I reply—it is not absolutely necessary; otherwise one would have to confess that no Catechism would be possible in the greater number of parishes in a diocese; but it is clear that wherever it is possible it is extremely desirable, and the greatest good will result from it.

At S. Sulpice, five are generally employed in a Catechism containing from two to four hundred children. They should always wear their surplice, *Catechista amictus superpellico* (*Decret. Augustan*). One of these is the Head Catechist. His place is in the sanctuary; he generally remains standing, having before him an armchair on which he places the portfolio containing the analyses which the children have made of the last Instruction, and the pictures. It is he who gives the admonitions, or words of advice, who reproves the children aloud, who gives the signals for them to stand or sit; he has his eye fixed on the whole young flock, and he is, as it were, the centre of all. The other Catechists are placed at different parts of the Catechism, on seats slightly elevated, from whence they can keep watch. They do not speak publicly at the Catechism, unless they are in the pulpit, or when, in reply to the Head, they give the good marks.

In a Catechism well conducted, the exercises are numerous and varied; there are prayers to be said, hymns to sing and to lead, notices to give; there is instruction, the homily, sometimes the Holy Eucharist; the placing, the arrivals, the dismissal, &c., &c. It is evident that for all this, several Catechists are better than one alone.

Several Catechists are able to share the different exercises of the Catechism, the children will not be wearied by hearing always the same voice, which even if eloquent becomes at length monotonous.

But above all, what is wanted at the Catechism is a most careful watchfulness. Now this watchfulness becomes much easier, and is evidently much better kept up, where there are several Catechists. While one speaks, questions, &c., the other watches.

And, with two or three, all the numerous details which enter into a Catechism well conducted, can be without effort carried out, and all the material and spiritual needs of the work can be supplied; and the children who see how much their Catechists are taken up with them and with all that interests them, respond much better to all their care and zealous wishes.

Experience and common sense tell us this, and consequently I have often found that zealous and practical priests, in parishes where there are no vicars, avail themselves for the Catechism of the help of the lay school-master, or of the *religious* who has charge of the boys' school, or of the school-mistress, be she lay or *religious;* she watches the girls, and he the boys; and both support and lead the singing of the hymns.

One ought then to lay down the principle, that in a Catechism of any size there must be several Catechists, one of whom is the *Director* of the others, the *Head* of the Catechism.

But here the difficulty begins; it is in vain to say there must be *direction,* that it should come from the Head, and that the others ought to accept it; vain to add that seminarists or young priests must have very poor minds and very poor hearts, if they think that their dignity is compromised by this subordination; vain to say that they would be unworthy of being chief Catechists, if even in this secondary and subordinate position, the Catechism and the children who are there does not give them all the interest their mind demands, or their heart.

Yes, it is in vain to say all this; the fact is that often young vicars, and also old ones, prefer to have Catechisms divided, because, in that case, they each manage their own, separately, with no Head but themselves, with no direction but their own, in a word, without being obliged to act in concert one with another, without depending one on another.

The truth is, gentlemen, wicked men will work together for evil, but it is not easy to find two good men who will work together for good; it is a most grievous thing to say, but it is true, even among the most devoted.

They desire to do good, they devote themselves to do it, provided they can do it alone.

But, to forget oneself a little, to do good with several, to devote oneself to do great things in concert with others, with the link of a common devotion and a mutual responsibility, nothing is more rare.

Let me hope, gentlemen, that it will not be thus amongst you, but that the charity of Jesus Christ, your love for the children, will inspire in you a more disinterested, and at the same time a more enlightened devotion towards them; for it must be well understood, and I have already repeated it many times, that in a well-conducted Catechism teaching is not the principal thing, the chief thing is piety, and personal, affectionate influence on the children; and the Catechists who assist, if they are good and devoted, can have as much of this as the Head.

Besides the authoritative teaching, there needs a pastoral, paternal, and maternal anxiety to study most attentively, and to find out what best suits the character, the tastes, the needs of the children; to watch for occasions of gaining their confidence and their heart; to seek out what can most touch and interest them; to learn their dispositions, their faults, their weaknesses, to make them know them, to reveal themselves to themselves, and always with affection, with charity, and with tenderness.

And in all this, *which includes everything*, the most humble Catechism can do the most.

Of course they must always endeavour to keep the whole Catechism under the chief influence of the Head, and avoid breakings-up and useless particularities; but still it is always true to say that the more they love the children and forget themselves, the more also they will love their work, will take interest in it, and will do it with pleasure and with success.

Whether there be one or many, every Catechist must be a shepherd, must be a father, must be a mother, must be able to say as Jesus Christ, "*Sicut gallina congregans pullos suos.*"

(3rd) On the care of details. "*If that is not understood,*" wrote an old Catechist to me a few days ago, "*if any one does not feel that necessity,* IT IS NOT WORTH HIS WHILE TO HAVE ANYTHING AT ALL TO DO WITH IT." He was right.

"And now," he adds, "men are called Catechists who come to give an instruction; if it is in a town, flowery, like an academic discourse, if in the country, careless and empty in form as in matter! Then having delivered this, they go away,

leaving the Catechism and the children. They would think it degrading to stay with these dear children, to see how they behave, to teach them how to join their hands, how to kneel, to look at their books, to listen, to pray, to sing the hymns and the praises of God; they would think it degrading to keep watch over them! . . . Are these Catechists? No, no. A mother is not so soon weary. She does not set her child down when she has given him his lesson, or else she is a mother unworthy of the name and of her own dignity. And these fine talkers perhaps have, in a corner of their portfolio, some diatribe (under the head of 'Observations') against that devotion and zeal which they have none of."

One can feel what zeal and what sorrow lies in these burning words. I thought it best to quote them to you literally; they will not displease you, I am sure; and moreover they do not touch you; but they put in a very clear light what you all feel, namely, that if the principle of zeal is understood as it ought to be, there is in this great and holy work no detail, even a material one, should it be only arranging the benches and dusting them, which can be displeasing to a Catechist, whoever he may be.

Keeping the lists, the plan of the benches, and marking absences, correcting analyses, keeping the registers, the charge of placing, the tune of the hymns: nothing can be neglected. Everything is of interest, and gives pleasure in the doing, for the very simple reason that everything which tends to the general good is of the highest interest.

And every Catechist who does not grasp this, who is not absolutely devoted to the spiritual and material service of the children of his Catechism, he is really good for nothing else; neither to give instruction, nor to preach the homily. For he is wanting in love, which means that he is wanting in strength, in grace, in unction, in persuasiveness of speech, in enlightenment; in fact, in everything which makes the good Priest, the true Pastor, the Catechist.

TENTH DISCOURSE.

THE ADVANTAGES OF THE CATECHISM FOR THE CATECHISTS THEMSELVES.

It must, gentlemen, also be well understood, that this ministry, which is so useful for the children, is not less so for the Catechists; and you will allow me to-day to insist upon this point, which touches you so nearly.

A man to whom I owe everything,—you know, gentlemen, that in this world, in the plan of God's providence, and in the course of His designs for us, there is nearly always one man to whom one owes everything, and who, for us, has been the man of God,—he then who was for me this man of God, M. Borderies, said some words to me once which I have never forgotten, and of which I have often felt the deep truth. When I was still at the great Seminary of S. Sulpice, an ecclesiastic whose name I have already mentioned, M. Gallard, at his death Archbishop of Rheims, having asked the Archbishop of Paris for a Catechist for the Madeleine, of which he was Curé, my name was given. When M. Borderies told me of it, I was much grieved; I was not yet a Priest, I clung to S. Sulpice with all my heart, I had no wish to leave it so soon. This man of God, my friend, my true father, consoled me, he declared to me that the greatest blessing of my life would be the result of this sacrifice, and with a specially tender expression, he added these words: "Catechisms! I owe all my blessings to them. . . . You will owe everything to them."

Well, gentlemen, if you will allow me to go on speaking to

you of myself, in my poor measure the words of M. Borderies have been fully realized. Yes, I have owed everything to the Catechisms, everything for my soul, everything for my ministry, everything for my heart, I would even say everything for my career, if that were a sacerdotal word, and if the meaning which is usually attached to it had ever entered into my thoughts.

And first, everything for my soul; and here, gentlemen, I am not speaking only of the graces and special blessings which accompany a ministry which is so specially dear to our Lord; of the love for the kingdom of heaven which naturally springs up in the heart of a Priest by the happy necessity of preaching it to those for whom it is specially prepared, "*Talium est regnum cælorum;*" nor of that faith in the Holy Eucharist, that living, tender, reverential faith, which is born in him by the happiness which is his of preparing these children, the blessed of God, to receive this great Sacrament, in their first Communion.

And yet this last point, gentlemen, above all, is much in the life of a Priest; I have known one, I know him still, who not long ago wrote me these words:

"Yesterday, God inspired me with the thought of meditating, during this octave, on the ministry for first Communion on which I have been so long engaged (he had been a Catechist fifteen years). Certainly it has been the greatest blessing of my life. *This it is which has made me love our Lord and the Holy Virgin; this which won my soul.* These children whom I prepared to receive our Lord, have bound me to Him. This it is which makes the remembrance of them indelible, and of all other recollections of my life, this gives me the greatest confidence before God. I have helped to make such admirable first Communions! angelical! penitent! Something must remain to me out of them. . . . Thus, I repeat, this is my happy recollection in this world, this to which I trust the most for obtaining mercy from God. And the Holy Eucharist being the end and the ground of all this ministry, I know not what better to choose for the subject of my meditations through these eight days; what do you think of it?" You will believe, gentlemen, that I replied that I thought as he

did. But let us leave all this, though it is so touching and true.

For myself, when I said that I owe everything for my soul to the Catechisms, it is principally in this way, and here is another admirable saying of M. Borderies, who had told me beforehand of this advantage.

"My child," he said to me—one day when I had asked him of his charity to give me some counsel for my guidance—"thanks to your Catechism, and the necessity it entails upon you of preaching goodness to the children, I have only one word to say in reply, only one counsel to give you—

"Be *true*, be sincere, in your Catechism, and you will always be a good Priest.

"Yes, be true; never be a liar; I mean, do yourself what you tell your children to do; practise yourself what you tell them to practise. In a word, never be a hypocrite, who says but does not."

Then he added, "This hypocrisy, my child, is often to be met with among Priests, unknown to themselves; but it is particularly odious in intercourse with children, who are so open that it is a shame to deceive them; they think us so good, and would have a horror of us if they knew that we are not ourselves the first to practise the holiness which we preach to them.

"For example: you advise them to read their little meditation in the morning; if you are true, you will never fail in your own meditation; you advise them to say the whole or part of their *chapelet*, always say your own; you advise them to make a little visit to the Holy Sacrament;—you who are so near the church, who frequent it, with what face could you advise others to visit the Holy Sacrament when you do not do it yourself?"

And will you allow me here, gentlemen, in the intimacy of these discourses, to make my humble confession? On account of my health, I had been travelling for three months in 1830. It happened to me, during that time, rather often to miss my *chapelet;* on returning to La Madeleine, one day, being in my confessional, a child comes in, kneels down, says his *Confiteor*,

&c., and then says, "Father, while I was in the country, in the holidays, I accuse myself of having neglected to say my *chapelet*."

The colour mounted into my face. From that moment my resolve was fixed, and by the grace of God, without having made any vow, since that time I have not failed in this respect.

And evidently this applies to everything,—to fleeing from the world and dangerous occasions, to precautions for chastity; to a rule of life, the employment of time, &c.

Nothing can be more effective or more weighty than those words of M. Borderies: "Be true with your children, and you will be a good Priest."

I said also that I owe to them everything *in my ministry*. The importance of the sacerdotal ministry includes chiefly, confessions, preaching, the management of a parish, of a seminary, or of a diocese. Well, gentlemen, the Catechism teaches all this.

And first, it teaches how to preach. It nearly always makes you acquire a great facility of speech, a kind of eloquence—if one understands by that word a simple and clear, a true and natural language—going direct *ad rem* and *ad hominem;* two necessary conditions of real eloquence. There is no place there for points of rhetoric, you must look in your own heart and soul for that which is to reach the heart and soul of others; you must even seek in the heart and soul of those to whom you speak for what shall make them listen. For myself, when I preach now in important pulpits, I preach absolutely as when I was Catechist; I give neither more nor less care to it. That does not mean that I do not prepare myself; no, my preparation is always a very serious thing, but not, humanly speaking, as regards the manner; what is necessary, and what I can do in this respect, comes almost of itself. Do not then deceive yourselves, gentlemen; the Catechism must be prepared for very seriously, even at great length. For ten years, though I learned nothing by heart, I wrote out everything—instructions, homilies, questions, stories,

words of advice; I could publish ten octavo volumes. And to this day I feel that I owe everything I can do in the pulpit to this old work of the Catechism.

When I have a sermon to make, I first go to consult this.

But it is not only *preaching* that it teaches, but also *confession*. Yes, *confessing children* has a wonderful power in training for the great art of the direction of souls. No human respect comes in there, no cowardly yielding, no effeminacy; but yet there is charity and the compassion so necessary for these lovable and feeble creatures. You learn there to go straight to a thing; to be true, clear, precise; to speak plainly: this is good, this is wrong, this is dangerous; to go straight to the inner soul; to get out of routine and of confessions only made as a matter of routine; to put clear and prudent questions, to know really the state of a conscience; and finally, I do not hesitate to say that the Catechism teaches how to *govern;* it requires authority, and it gives it, a firm and gentle, and above all a watchful and attentive authority; these are the great characteristics of authority; well, they are more easy there than elsewhere.

And the Catechism is also a government of details; it teaches the science of details. Now, this is an essential point in all government. Ecclesiastical government, whether of a diocese, or a parish, or a seminary, great or small, prospers or perishes according as the details of it are well or ill-managed. You must know well, in everything, without exception, great things are only great and perfect by this matter of detail; and on the contrary, everything is lowered and ruined by the neglect of details. No doubt, one must not lose oneself in them, be drowned in them, as people say; but care in them must be carried even to perfection. I repeat that the Catechism is a science of details, and that our Lord's words apply to it in all their truth: "*Euge, serve bone et fidelis, quia* SUPER PAUCA *fuisti fidelis,* SUPER MULTA *te constituam.*"

The qualities which the government of this little family demands and develops, are just the same that will be wanted in a wider administration; for a Curé, if in a parish; for a

Superior, if in a seminary; for a Bishop, if in a diocese. Take one thing only, what wisdom is necessary in dealing with the parents!

For myself, it is my deep and clear conviction: the Catechism, well worked, is above all things an apprenticeship in the art of governing.

I said also, *Everything for the heart*—for affection, for remembrance; there is enough there for the most loving heart. This pure affection takes possession of the soul, and leaves no place there for any other. It elevates, it detaches, it purifies. For myself, ever since I devoted myself to children, I have never had the thought of loving anything else on earth, and, moreover, I have never found anything so lovable.

Just as on a mountain, when we are breathing the clear air which is so light and pure on these heights, one feels drawn to them as by a charm, we feel this life-giving air as a sort of relish, we cannot bear to go down again into the lower regions, where we know the air of this sad earth will be so much less sweet.

And so the remembrance of these joys is stronger and deeper than anything else; an undying remembrance for myself, and I may say also for the greater number of the children I have brought up.

There are days, anniversaries of the Catechism, that I cannot see come round without an emotion which I cannot control; and I have constantly, for many years past, proof that the remembrance of these years, the happiest of their life, still lives in the heart of that family which God gave me in the Catechism. These children are very numerous, those alone whom I prepared for their first Communion are several thousand; this is my great comfort in the presence of God, my chief ground of hope for eternity; they are dispersed through all parts of France, and even beyond; almost every day I receive some touching and unexpected testimony from these dear souls, whom I have never forgotten, for I know them still all by their name, by their baptismal name chiefly, by which we never failed to call them at the Catechism; and

I cannot doubt that they retain for me an affection which is my greatest reward upon earth.

I have travelled much; never without meeting, either in France, or Italy, or Germany, or England, some one of these dear children of the Madeleine. "You do not remember me? It was you who prepared me for my first Communion; I belonged to your Catechism." That is their first exclamation; then they go on, "I made my first Communion with such an one; he was our *Intendant.*" And then they will tell me the names of the most remarkable children at the Catechism, of the dignitaries, of the head of their forms; and then they will bring back particulars of which I had thought no more, but which they had always remembered, &c.

There are some even who write to me, often with no other object than to remind me that they were with me at the S. Hyacinthe Chapel, and that God, of His goodness, had there, by means of my poor ministry, worked good to their souls, and that they had a desire to tell me so; and sometimes there are people whom I have never seen since that time, and that is now twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five years ago! So indissoluble are the ties formed between the Catechist and his children! so strong and lasting are the early recollections of life! The children of that time are now become men, some of them are in high positions; the goodness and purity of their youth, their honourable life, the good they do in the world, they acknowledge openly that they owe it all to the Catechism. "You do not remember me," said one of my former children to me a few months ago in Paris, whom I had not since seen; "you taught me at the Catechism; I am —— Ah, monsieur, I owe you much," he added. And he who thus spoke to me, a young man, full of talent, the son of a procurator-general, with a brilliant worldly future before him, has given up the world to devote himself to works of charity; he has made a vow of poverty, and he and some other young men, Christians like himself, really *religious* under a lay dress, have founded that society, well known in Paris, which devotes itself to works of care for others; they only eat bread of a second or third quality, that they may have more to share

with the poor; and I met him one Sunday spending his evening at a meeting of his young artisans. "I owe you everything," he said, and with a tone and look I cannot describe, he added, "I owe it to you that I am here."

I know also many deeply pious women, accomplished mothers of families, real sisters of charity hidden under a worldly dress and manners, among whom I can still recognize, and thank God for it, the lasting fruits of their Catechism years, the prolonged result of the impulse then received, of the direction then given to the thoughts and feelings and the habits of the whole life. I might add that here again one meets with the most wonderful gratitude in return, far beyond what we know we deserve, and yet it must be said it is the most precious thing to be met with in this world.

But I will be silent on this point, and would only wish, gentlemen, to fix your attention on the deeper blessings of this great, important, and necessary ministry, which has such power over souls, and which is to a Priest's heart so sweet, so easy, so salutary, and so comforting!

ELEVENTH DISCOURSE.

THE CHAPEL.

I MUST conclude, gentlemen; but first I must tell you one essential condition for all these blessings of which I have told you, and which I promise you.

And it is this:

This religious family, of which I invite you to be the father, must have a dwelling, a home; this flock, of which you are to be the Shepherd, must have a fold; these children of a heavenly Father, to whom you are to reveal His mysteries, and even confide to them all the treasures of the kingdom of heaven, must have a sanctuary; in a word, to do the work of the Catechism truly and effectually, you must have a Chapel.

The men of the trade, if I may be allowed the expression, have always been perfectly convinced of this. There is not a single experienced Catechist who has not seen that as every work, even the smaller ones, of piety and zeal, every confraternity, all charitable associations, even the commonest schools, have their special place of meeting; so it cannot be that the most difficult and important of all these, the very school of Jesus Christ, should be without it; it cannot be that these children should be thrown *pêle-mêle* in the midst of comers and goers, in a large Church, exposed to the most grievous distractions.

"And yet," says the *Method of S. Sulpice*, "looking only to the practice of some parishes, one would suppose that the middle of the nave is the most suitable place in the Church

for the Catechism. But that is not the opinion of the founders of our Catechisms. They were convinced that it was extremely difficult to keep up the attention of children if brought together in the middle of the nave of a parish Church. And it is evident that in catechising, one can only fix the attention of the children by speaking to them in an easy and natural tone of voice; but that is quite impossible under such circumstances. Besides, in a Catechism, absolute silence is necessary; and these children, naturally so frivolous, must have nothing before them to distract their attention: if they are in the nave, will they not be every moment distracted by passers-by or by the inquisitive, to say nothing of funeral processions and other ceremonies?"

It was to obviate these inconveniences that the Council of Besançon, held in 1571, forbad, under heavy penalties, all adult persons to enter the Church while the Curé was catechising the little children. "*Ne per grandiorum superbiam et insolentiam Curatus perturbetur.*"

It was these same great inconveniences which led the founders of the S. Sulpice Catechisms to have special chapels built, set apart for this purpose, and separate from the Church.

"There is hardly any parish," adds the *Method of S. Sulpice*, "where it is not possible to do this. You have but to reserve one Chapel for the Catechism, to separate it from the Church by a partition, or by hangings, and this will be quite sufficient."

I will speak again upon this last advice, but for the present gentlemen, wishing to go to the root of this important question, I will confine myself to adding that the children must *have their Chapel to themselves*, that they must be as it were *at home there*, and that they must feel that they are so, if you wish that they should love it. Yes, it must belong to them, they must be pleased at possessing and enjoying it; they must be eager to take care of it, to decorate it on festivals, &c. There they will get to love their Catechism; there they will delight to return, singing, "*Salut aimable et cher asile*"; there it is that they will take pleasure in persevering; there it is that they will catch the *spirit of the Christian family*; there that they

will learn how truly they are the favoured children of the father of their family, and the cherished flock of their good shepherd; there it is that they will learn more easily, more happily, to love God and their religion, to hold in reverence their Catechists and all the lessons they receive from them; there it is finally that they will enjoy the happiness of which the remembrance will be to them as the remembrance of the paternal home.

I said, *a chapel which the children will be eager to take care of, to adorn, and to decorate magnificently for festivals;* for here, gentlemen, is a great secret, drawn out of the depths of the human heart. A place which any one has taken care of, which he has ornamented, which he has decorated himself, is a place he loves, because he has put something of his own there, and because in a certain way he sees himself there, and because it is the nature of a child, as well as of a man, to love himself in his works. Here then is a means, an infallible secret, for attaching these young children to their Catechism Chapel, as parishioners are attached to their Church, the members of a confraternity to their altar. It is self-love, some will say: yes, but a good self-love; it is self-love made use of to turn the heart towards God and holy things; it is the art of making nature serve grace, of grafting the Christian on the man.

If what I say here is not sufficiently clear to any, let them, if they have the opportunity, ask those who formerly attended the Catechisms of S. Sulpice, or of the Madeleine, or of M. Borderies, what the Chapel of S. Thomas Aquinas was for them, or of S. Hyacinthe, and what sort of remembrance they still have of it.

The truth is, that if we wish that the Catechism should attract the children, and that they should come to it with joy and with eagerness, they must have their own Chapel, and must be really at home there. I could hardly give an instance of a single Catechism of Perseverance, or even of a simple Catechism for the first Communion, which has succeeded, which has had any great results, any really useful and serious influence, without a special Chapel.

All the zeal of the Curés then should be employed in

providing for themselves Chapels specially set apart for the work of the Catechisms.

It is indeed done now almost everywhere, when circumstances permit. In Paris, Chapels for the Catechisms have multiplied wonderfully for some years past, and they are magnificent. I would ask you, gentlemen, when you are in the capital, to visit the Chapels of S. Roch, of S. Etienne-du-Mont, of S. Louis d'Antin, of S. Jacques-du-Haut-Pas, of S. Philippe-du-Roule, &c. In the provinces and in the country, always when a Church is built or restored, care is now taken to arrange a Chapel for the Catechisms, larger or smaller, according to the needs of the parish. In Orléans itself we have, in the last few years, five new Chapels for Catechisms.

I know that in this matter we cannot do all we would. But when one wishes a thing strongly, when one feels the absolute necessity, or at least the extreme importance, of anything for the salvation of souls, one can do much, I would almost say one can do everything. At least, what we can at no price do without, even in the poorest parish, is a suitable place; if it can be a Chapel closed and separate, nothing so good; the choir of the Church and the Sanctuary are a resource, if we can do nothing better, taking care always that they are inclosed by curtains, or in some other way; but it is of necessity that the children should be by themselves, away from the noise of passers-by, away from curious eyes.

If, failing a Chapel in the parish Church, you are obliged to hold the Catechism in a sacristy, or in some large room at the presbytery, at the school, or elsewhere, it is necessary then that this place should be made perfectly fit for the sacredness of the ministry, and the work which is to be done there. It must, at least for the time of the Catechism, be transformed into a real chapel, and be like a holy sanctuary. The image of our Lord, the holy Crucifix, must preside there; the image of the Blessed Virgin and of other Saints must adorn and beautify it. As far as possible, there should be also a small altar suitably prepared, lights, hangings, &c.

But of all things, you must take care that the place has no secular look about it, it must not look like a class-room,

neither must it be in a thoroughfare, which must inevitably distract the children.

I have seen in the country, and even in the towns, Catechisms held in the middle of the church, in the open nave; sometimes close to the entrances and the swinging doors, and sometimes even—shall I tell it?—in the porch. There I have seen a poor Priest, alone in the midst of the children, who were scattered about on a few benches badly arranged, and a few chairs here and there; it was literally as if at a public promenade. There I have seen these poor children, boys and girls, benumbed with cold in winter, wet, exposed to the wind, and to the view and all the critical remarks and the laughter of the passers-by.

And their Catechist, without surplice,[1] in the midst of them, calling out and gesticulating, but all in vain, to get attention and silence; angrily going about amongst them, making them repeat I know not what lesson of the Catechism.

One day, I remember it still with grief, standing behind a pillar, I watched this sad scene; to me a subject for the deepest compassion, for some others of surprise and derision.

And it must be owned it was ridiculous as well as pitiable; for meanwhile the vergers and the *Suisse* were going about; a *wedding* came in all the array and brightness of joy; a *funeral* service, with mournful chants, was completed, and the servants of the Church were hurriedly arranging the chairs. And at every new distraction all the children looked up, turned round, or rather it would be truer to say that they were always looking up, and their eyes wandering in every direction; in fact it was all they could do to follow all that was going on around them. How could I have had courage to find fault with them? The blame was certainly not with them, but with their deplorable Catechist.

I have already told you my opinion, gentlemen, about Catechisms held in classes, or in the school-rooms of colleges or boarding-schools, and sometimes even of convents. There the children sit on the same benches, at the same tables, where a

[1] The councils expressly require that the surplice should always be worn at the Catechism.

little while before they have had a lesson which wearied them, where they have received a rebuke which vexed them; then in the midst of all these associations and recollections, a Priest comes, after a German professor or a teacher of the piano, to give his lesson! I have seen this often, I repeat, even in houses of Christian education; so rare is pastoral zeal, or the feeling for what is suitable in religious things!

I had once the opportunity of giving my opinion on this point, very freely, to a Priest who conducted the Catechism in this fashion, and complained of the inattention of his children.

"What are you complaining of?" I said to him. "It is not their fault, nor yours; it is the fault of the place you have chosen. S. Thomas himself, the angelic Doctor, in your place would have been able to do nothing. It is quite clear that S. Thomas Aquinas, catechising, or even teaching theology to the doctors of the Sorbonne, in such a place would not have been listened to, he would not have heard himself. The distraction both for the master and the scholars would be inevitable. But I am wrong in saying it is not your fault. It is your fault! How can you choose such a place? Have you no pity on these children? How could you make up your mind to give them their Catechism in this public place? Why, there is not a village school in France which is not a place by itself, arranged, swept, kept in good order, heated in the winter, closed and quiet always, away from all distraction and comers and goers; not a school which, in a word, is not a chosen place, made on purpose, and built at great expense, so that it may be fit and suitable and comfortable for the children who are to be taught there to read and write! It is only the school of Jesus Christ, the school where souls are brought up, where they are taught to love God, where the secrets of the life eternal are revealed to them; it is only the school of Jesus Christ which, thanks to your negligence, has no fire, no place, and is such that it can only leave on these poor children a recollection of sadness and weariness and disgust." It is hard to me to say this, but what is still harder to me is to see that, from force of habit, such a disgraceful and unseemly state of things is hardly considered a matter of reproach.

What I saw there, gentlemen, and what I relate, I must add, I have often seen: I have seen it once even in this diocese; I have seen it in the towns and in the country; I have seen it—I will tell it without mentioning a name which I revere—I have seen it in one of the most celebrated Churches and cities in the world, and there under all the most shameful and deplorable circumstances!

And I have inwardly groaned at the sight!

For after all, if these children are dear to us, if we look upon them as children of God, if we value their souls, if we remember what Jesus Christ has done for them, if we reflect that they are the precious and the last hope of the Church, how can we treat them so? If the word of the Gospel is not a lie, if, as we often repeat, the Catechism is for the flock of Jesus Christ, must we not provide a fold and pastures for the youngest lambs of the flock?

If, as again we have said, and it is true, that the Catechism is a family where souls are reared up for God, must there not be for every family a home and paternal roof?

It is useless to say, "But is not the Church itself the Father's house? why then not hold the Catechism there?"

No doubt, the Church is the House common to all the faithful, but it is just because it is a House for all, that there needs a sanctuary apart, which shall be the sweet and dear home of childhood and youth.

And is not the same thing found in every family, in all great houses? Wherever it can be, is there not always one part allotted to the children, where special care is lavished upon them, and the most affectionate watchfulness and all the teaching which they need given to them?

And again, in parishes, have not the smallest confraternities their altar, their chapel, of which they take care, and where they keep their festivals?

Shall it be only then these dear children for whom nothing shall be done? When, besides, it would be so easy, and would give such happy results!

But if finally you are absolutely condemned to hold the Catechism in the Church, I do not forbid it, provided that the

children are not exposed to all the miserable inconveniences I have just mentioned; provided that these young children are not as it were left forlorn, lost, frozen, wandering about in the middle of the Church or in a corner; that at least they shall be in the sanctuary and in the choir, and that then every necessary precaution shall be taken so that they may be recollected, by themselves, quiet, and so edified and interested by the Catechism.

I have already mentioned to you many times, gentlemen, the name of M. Borderies, the celebrated Catechist of S. Thomas Aquinas; I will conclude this first part of our discourses by giving you some account of all that the *Sainte Chapelle*,[1] in Paris, was to the children who met there at the beginning of this century, M. Borderies being their Catechist.

At this period, the Priests who had taken the oath still occupied the Church of Nôtre-Dame; for the performance of Catholic worship, the Government had consented to let the *Sainte Chapelle* to M. Borderies, and his friend, M. de Lalande, who was afterwards Curé of S. Thomas Aquinas, then Bishop of Rodez, and finally Archbishop of Sens.

The Government had only granted them the underground chapel; but under the generous care of these two young and holy Priests, this sanctuary was soon splendidly decorated. Several altars were there erected, and adorned with flowers, candlesticks, gilt candelabra, and beautiful reliquaries; some beautiful crucifixes of bronze and ivory, which had been hidden and preserved from impious hands during the reign of Terror, were now again brought forth for the veneration of the faithful; and sacred pictures concealed the nakedness of the walls.

But the richest and most heavenly ornaments of this holy place were the piety and zeal of the remarkable children who were there gathered together; and the angelic fervour of these two young Catechists, who devoted themselves day and night to the service of their Lord and these young souls.

It was really quite an Apostolic Catechism, and the first ages could show nothing more beautiful.

[1] It was built by S. Louis, and its beautiful restoration is just completed.

I have heard M. Borderies say that the Catechism at S. Thomas Aquinas, great as was its renown and even its fervour, was never to be compared with that at the *Sainte Chapelle.*

To understand it well, you must picture to yourselves this miserable time, when religion had so many sorrows, so many fears, but also some hopes.

The greater number of the children who attended this Catechism belonged to families who were deeply Christian, who, during the storm of the Revolution, had remained faithful to religion, even at the peril of their lives.

These pious children, who had been taught by their parents, revered M. Borderies as a martyr for the faith, and cherished him as an angel come from Heaven. No words can describe the eagerness, the hunger with which they gathered up even the smallest crumbs of the word of God which came from his mouth.

All their parents attended these holy instructions; the chapel was crowded. Throughout the whole week (we are exaggerating nothing, these details have been given to us by those who were themselves present at these holy gatherings) —throughout the whole week there was a holy impatience for the next Sunday, when joyfully, on the Lord's day of rest, they would come and take their place again in the holy assembly, being all, as in the early days, "of one heart and one soul."

There, all the meanness of human respect was unknown; there, all base halting between Jesus Christ and the world was despised; the Gospel, in its completeness, had its true and life-giving effect; there, all these hearts which had been tried and purified by the fire of persecution, found their greatest happiness in being nourished by these good Priests with the words of faith, and all mutually consoled themselves for the evils of the present life by the hope of the blessedness of the life to come.

The children themselves enjoyed this high teaching, and their young souls were kindled with fresh ardour at the words of their Apostle. They were proud to obey his voice, and when he made them feel what a glory it was for them to be

Christians, young as they were, in the midst of the general falling away; to be faithful to religion, which was everywhere betrayed; to help, even they themselves, to keep and guard the sacred fire, it was wonderful to see how they seemed to be lighted up by a divine flame, as sometimes, their hand on their heart, they vowed eternal fidelity to the Lord and His ministers.

No doubt there were some amongst them who later on did not keep these holy promises, but very few: the children of the *Sainte Chapelle* have been, nearly all, faithful. Many were plunged into the world, carried away by the whirlwind of pleasure or of business; but they never forgot their *Sainte Chapelle* and the friend of their childhood.

Wherever they may be now, in whatever position, should these pages come across them, we are sure we shall not make them blush when we say that they are still steadfast in faith and honour, that the name of M. Borderies is still dear to them (perhaps even may still bring the tears into their eyes), that it still has power enough over their heart to bring them back, and if need be, to win them again to God.

But we can say with certainty, that there are some among them who for twenty years have been thrown in the midst of most serious risks for their virtue, engaged in most difficult professions, exposed to the strongest and most subtle temptations, but have never failed. One remembrance, one word, one name has always saved them. One of them revealed to us the secret. In the midst of every danger, the look and the voice of M. Borderies kept them up; again seemed to sound in their ears the energetic and touching adieu of the holy Priest: "*My children, we shall not be always together; but we shall always love each other: only wherever you are, always remember the* SAINTE CHAPELLE!"

And he who repeated these words to us, and who is now a man of seventy-six, said, with an emotion I cannot describe:

"Monsieur, that is the word which saved me. Twenty times have I been in terrible dangers; I escaped them all by again saying to myself: *Remember the Sainte Chapelle!*"

BOOK II.—THE METHOD.

PRELIMINARY DISCOURSE.

THE GENERAL IDEA.

It is not sufficient, gentlemen, to have set forth principles, as I have already done, and to have supported them by great examples; it is not sufficient even to have studied our Lord Jesus Christ in His divine relations with children; it is not sufficient to have shown that the Catechism should be a fold, having its devoted shepherds; that it should be a family, having like every other family the shelter of a home; and that, thus understood and practised, the Catechism has the greatest possible advantages for Priests who devote themselves to it, and particularly for young Priests, training them for the zealous performance of their sacerdotal duties.

No, that is not enough, we must further study it practically; we must explain what method must be followed so that these great principles may be realized; so that these great advantages may be gained, and so that the Catechism may truly be a family in which the education of souls is carried on, and also be a great school for pastoral ministry and apostolic preaching, in a word a means of grace and blessings for parishioners and for the whole Church.

Well, gentlemen, for all this, there is something quite easy to do, some very simple conditions to fulfil, one natural and unfailing method, if it is carried out with heart and with zeal.

Everything consists in thoroughly understanding what I

have said and said again already so many times, but which nevertheless I must repeat again here, because it is the fundamental point in the method I speak of; namely, that the Catechism is not only for the instruction of the mind, but for the education of the soul; that the Catechist is not a professor of religion, but a Pastor; that the children are not scholars, but the favoured lambs of Jesus Christ's flock, the cherished children of our heavenly Father.

That being laid down and well understood, I go on further to say that there are not two good methods of doing the work of the Catechism; all experience shows that in fact, except in some slight differences of detail, there is but one, the method of S. Sulpice, which is celebrated throughout the world, and has produced wonderful fruits wherever it has been employed, not only by young Seminarists [1] in a ministry which is of necessity transient and changeable, but by parish Priests, devoting themselves always and for many years to the work.

According to this method then (you have already had a glimpse of it in the preceding chapters) *the Catechism is not only words, not only instruction: it is an action, it is a work;* it is the whole work of salvation: *opus ministerii, opus salutis.*

In this method, the question is not only how to instruct, or how to make religion understood; but how to touch souls, to convert them, to make them love God and Jesus Christ; how to root out all the evil inclinations of these young hearts, and to sow in them the seed of all virtues; how to inspire them with a horror of evil and with the love of good. This is the end always to be kept in view.

[1] Not that I find any fault with the employment of the young Seminarists in the parish of S. Sulpice, nothing is further from my thoughts; they bring to it the spring, the purity and the ardour of a zeal to which nothing is comparable. I would willingly say of the Catechisms of S. Sulpice what Fénelon said of S. Sulpice itself: "*It is a fountain of grace for the clergy and for all France.*" It is there that the best Catechists are formed, and I only regret that all the young Seminarists cannot be so employed.

Still it is not to be wondered at if I say that these young men, afterwards raised to the Priesthood, and doing the work of the Catechism in their own parishes for many long years, may perfect themselves and perfect their work.

And it need hardly be said that to attain to so high an aim, a dry and cold instruction, however solid, cannot suffice.

On the other hand, experience has shown, that a certain number of very simple exercises, but well combined together, are necessary, and at the same time sufficient for producing most wonderful results; for thoroughly instructing the children, interesting and delighting them, making them love God, attaching them strongly to their religion, and also to the Catechism, and making them feel at home there.

And to begin with, there are PRINCIPAL *exercises*, which are the very foundation of the Catechism, without which it would not be a Catechism.

These Exercises are:

(1st) Reciting the letter of the Catechism, with a very easy explanation of it by way of question and answer. This is what is called at S. Sulpice, *the game of good marks* (*le jeu des bons points*).

(2nd) The Instruction.

(3rd) The reading of the Gospel and the Homily.

Besides these PRINCIPAL *exercises*, there are SECONDARY exercises, secondary and yet quite as important as the first; and for two reasons: the first that they are powerful helps in training the children in piety and in educating them as Christians: the second, that they add wonderfully to the interest of the Catechism, and in fact constitute its great charm for the children.

They are: (1st) The admonitions (*avis*) from the Head Catechist.

(2nd) Singing the Hymns.

(3rd) Prayers.

These secondary exercises, skilfully combined with the principal ones, prepare for them; and sometimes are an agreeable change, and a rest from them, which is no slight advantage. If your instruction is immediately followed by the homily, with no interruption, it is fatiguing—your instruction is forgotten, your homily is lost. But between these two introduce a hymn, one which the children know well;

or perhaps some interesting advice or a story, the children are delighted, rested, and refreshed.

These then, gentlemen, are the Exercises which go to make up the Catechism:

Repetition, Instruction, the homily, the admonitions from the Head Catechist, singing hymns, prayers. These six exercises are enough, but they are all necessary.

No more is necessary for the most important Catechism, no less is necessary for the humblest.

They are sufficient for and they correspond to all the wants of the soul, to all the natural instincts of the children, to all the desires of their heart; to everything which their age demands, or their mind, or their imagination, or their restlessness, or their curiosity; to all in fact which is needed for training them in faith, in religion, in piety, in the fear and love of God, and in the horror of evil: and all this done with a charm which enthrals them, and with a variety which so interests them that they are kept listening and on the alert for two hours; for, as you know, that is the time which was fixed by S. François de Sales as the right length for a good Catechism, "*Duabus horis.*" (*Réglem. d'Annecy.*)

And when to all this you add the analyses, the stories, the rewards, the good marks; and sacred pictures, and prizes and honours and emulation; and then the *fêtes* and the fervent Communions, and the *Billets* (a form of question and answer repeated by specially chosen children, as will be explained later on) solemnly repeated and explained; and then the flowers and the hangings, and the visits of great personages such as the Curé, the Dean, the Archdeacon, or a Bishop; and games for the boys at the presbytery with the Priests, and with the sisters for the girls; with all this, you will not fail to secure results which will astonish you.

I said that all this is sufficient, but I must add that all this is necessary. If you cut off any one of these exercises, the children may not be aware of it, but they will suffer from it; something is wanting, they will get tired, they will no longer be taking in the nourishment which their soul, their mind, their heart needs; they cease to listen, you will not be able to

hold them, to make them persevere. And we must never forget that perseverance is here the touch-stone.

You see it, I am sure, gentlemen, for reflection and common sense teach all this as well as experience. There has never been a contrary experience, but there have been a thousand to teach us, that to make children attentive, and to interest them so that they shall persevere, there must be a method and very regular order, and yet at the same time a great variety, in the system and the entire work of the Catechism; and it is with this view that a series of exercises has been arranged, all different, yet all tending to the same end; succeeding each other without interruption, separated, or rather connected by singing hymns, by stories, &c.

I say, *succeeding each other without interruption*, and as I have said this before, I will here explain myself: yes, gentlemen, it must be without even a moment's interruption, otherwise the children will at once be looking about.

Whoever cannot see this, can know nothing of the nature of children. Therefore I repeat that there must never be the slightest break between the exercises. I am so accustomed to this perfection, and it is so easy to attain and yet so necessary, that, as you know, gentlemen, in my pastoral visitations, I am always distressed if I do not find it; if, for example, in a Church, there is any interval between giving out the tune for the hymns and beginning to sing them; have you not yourselves observed that that is quite sufficient to distract every one? And remember also, gentlemen, that there is never any interruption in the Offices of the Church. If there were an interruption in the choir, it would be felt to be a disorder, every one would be surprised, and look for the reason.

I said also, the exercises must all *tend to the same end*, for at every meeting there should be one *special* point which we endeavour to impress upon the children, and to that point everything as far as possible should contribute, the hymns, the stories, the homily, the instruction, in fact everything.

And now perhaps, gentlemen, you will say, But how is all

this to be done, *this order, this uninterrupted series of exercises, how is it all to be kept up?*

And this I now hope to show you, just as if I were holding a Catechism in your presence.

A Meeting of the Catechism.

First of all, I suppose there to be a Chapel for the Catechism, properly prepared, the forms well arranged and well dusted, the altar suitably decorated, the doors open, the order as to how the children are to sit exactly arranged beforehand, the Catechists strictly punctual, that is to say THEY ARE TO BE THERE BEFORE THE CHILDREN, ready to direct them as they come into the Chapel, keeping order and preventing any distraction: all this is most important.

Supposing then all this done:

1. As soon as the children are seated in their places, the Head Catechist speaks a few words to them, telling them of the reverence with which they must join in the prayer which opens the Catechism, then he claps three times. At the first clap, the children stand up; at the second, they bow to the altar; at the third, they kneel down. Then one of the Catechists, or one of the children, kneeling in advance on one of the altar-steps, reads with an audible voice, and very carefully and reverently, the prayer before the Catechism, as marked in the *Manual*. Meanwhile, the other Catechists watch the children with great care, preventing any of them from lounging on the form, or disturbing the rest.

2. As soon as the prayer is finished, the Catechist again claps three times; at the first clap, the children get up, at the second, they bow to the altar, at the third, they sit down; directly they are seated, they sing three or four verses of a hymn, the Catechist giving out the page with a loud and distinct voice.

3. The moment the last verse is finished, the Head Catechist gives several little claps, which is the understood signal for the choir to cease; then he begins some teaching as to the season, perhaps Advent or Lent; or the special Sunday or festival, and the moment he finishes, the *questioning* begins, or otherwise the recitation of the diocesan Catechism.

4. For even before the Head Catechist began, the Catechist who is to ask the questions should have gone into the pulpit, to have ready the book which contains the lesson, and also the *large list*, in *which the names of the children are written, in the order of their places on the forms.* Directly the Head Catechist has ceased speaking, the questioner calls by name one of the children, always by his Christian name as well as his surname; the child immediately stands up, makes the sign of the Cross, and with an audible voice answers the questions of the Catechism.

5. In the course of this questioning, the Head Catechist puts some

questions, more or less difficult, to two or three of the children who answer best, *on the meaning of the Catechism*. The children answer, and this is what is called at S. Sulpice the *jeu de bons points*, because here the children gain or lose their good marks for knowledge, according as they have answered well or ill.

6. As soon as the questioning is finished, the lesson to be learnt for the next time is given out; and to make sure that all know what it is, sometimes one child is asked, and again another, what the lesson is; and they are made to speak out, so that all the rest may hear.

7. Directly after the questioning, the Head Catechist reports upon the analyses made by the children, and brought by them for inspection the time before.

8. The report on the analyses being finished, the Head Catechist gives out a *cantique* in preparation for the instruction. The choir begin at once. While four or five verses of this *cantique* are being sung, the Catechist who is to give the instruction goes into the pulpit, having first said a short prayer at the foot of the altar.

9. He begins the instruction, as soon as the Head Catechist has given the signal for the singing to cease.

10. After the instruction, the Catechist comes down from the pulpit, and the children sing a *cantique*.

11. After the *cantique*, the Head Catechist gives his admonitions, if he has not done so before the instruction.

12. Directly the Head Catechist has finished his admonitions, he gives out a *cantique* to prepare the children for the *homily*. The Catechist on whom this duty falls goes to the pulpit without delay, and as soon as the *cantique* is finished, the holy Gospel is read to the children; then he addresses them in a homily, which is an exhortation made as clear, simple, vigorous, and touching as possible.

13. In all Catechisms, excepting the Catechisms of Perseverance, after three or four verses of the *cantique* which succeeds the homily, each Catechist, being called upon by the Head Catechist, gives the names of two children who have been specially attentive and steady throughout the whole time, and they are given marks for good behaviour. And then the Catechist, or the child who has said the prayer before the Catechism, says also that which concludes it.

14. After the prayer, the Head Catechist makes the children sit down, gives out the *cantique* which is to be sung as they go; he then gives them the signal, and they go out, one row after another; it is his office to see that none of the children wait, and he does not allow the slightest irregularity in the line.

15. While they are moving out, a Catechist stands at the door of the Chapel, who prevents strangers from coming in, and keeps the children in order till the last of them is gone.

Such, gentlemen, is the rule and the usual procedure of a

Catechism; such is the exact order of the different exercises of which it is composed, and which should succeed each other without hurry, but yet without any interruption.

For all this, two hours is needed, unless the Catechism should only contain a very small number of children. But I will answer for it, that if these two hours are employed as they should be, there will be no lassitude or weariness felt during the whole time, either by the children or the Catechists.

I will now say something of each of these exercises, both the principal ones and the secondary; I shall not be able to say everything, but I will enter into as much practical detail as is possible.

SECOND DISCOURSE.

ON QUESTIONING, AND THE GOOD MARKS FOR KNOWLEDGE.

I.

ON QUESTIONING.

QUESTIONING on the text of the Catechism, and the repetition of the text by the children, is a *principal* exercise; you all know the reason of this, gentlemen, and I will not stop to enforce it.

Still, on the importance and the necessity of making the children study carefully the letter of the Catechism, listen, gentlemen, to a man, a rationalist philosopher, whose testimony is the less to be doubted on this point, because, after having known and studied the Catechism, he, most unhappily, was unfaithful to that memory.

M. Jouffroy somewhere says, "There is a little book, which is taught to children, and on which they are questioned in the Church; read this little book, it is the Catechism; you will find in it a solution of all the questions I have advanced, yes, of all, without exception. Ask a Christian whence comes the human race, he knows; where it is going, he knows; how it will go, he knows. Ask this poor child, who may never in his life have thought about it, why he is here below, and what will become of him after his death, he will give you a sublime answer. . . . The origin of the world, the origin of the human species, the question of race, the destiny of man in

this life and in the other, the relation of man to God, the duty of man towards his fellow-creatures, the rights of man over creation; on none of these points is he ignorant; neither will he, when grown up, have any difficulty as to natural rights, or political rights, or human rights; for all this proceeds, flows clearly, and as it were, naturally, from Christianity. This is what I call a grand religion; I know it by this mark: *no question which interests humanity does it leave unanswered.*"

There is hardly anything, gentlemen, to add to these words, and therefore I will confine myself to reminding you, so that all your ideas on this important point may be perfectly clear, that the Catechism is an exposition, abridged, but yet complete, of the truths of the Catholic faith, and that every word has been so well weighed, that this little book contains, if I may so express myself, the very purest essence of the dogmas and of the morality of Christianity. It is an entire theology, elementary no doubt, but deep, and brought within reach of every understanding. It is also a course of high philosophy, the most learned, and at the same time the most simple that human wisdom can take counsel of; for, as the celebrated and unhappy Jouffroy so clearly perceived, it leaves unanswered none of the great questions which interest humanity.

This knowledge of the letter of the Catechism, then, though it may, gentlemen, seem unimportant, is not a knowledge to be despised; no, it is immense, for all religion is comprised in it; it is very decided, for each one of its formulas contains an exact truth; and it is almost indelible, for everything is expressed in such clear and forcible terms, that once engraven in the memory, they remain there for life.

Yes, when once the Catechism has been well learnt, perfectly learnt, it is never forgotten. There are innumerable and sometimes very curious examples of this. Men have been known who had lost the faith, who had gone through all the storms of the wars of the Revolution and of the Empire, and who then, after fifty or sixty years of a most irreligious life, have returned to God; and all the answers of their Catechism, all the formulas of the Christian faith have come back to them at once, as if by instinct.

And you will understand, gentlemen, with what advantage towards their salvation! I ought to add how comforting to their soul, how softening to their heart, as they feel the happiness of possessing again this remembrance of their childhood, these teachings of the good Priest who brought them up, or perhaps the lessons learnt from their mother! But I need not say more on this subject.

Upon this important exercise, gentlemen, I will confine myself to making seven practical observations:

1. The lessons should be short, but always learnt by heart exactly, and said perfectly. It must never be only almost perfect, the children must never be allowed to change one word or one syllable.

Short, but so that the whole Catechism may be gone through in one year, and three times before the first Communion; this is for the little Catechisms as well as for those of the *Semaine* (*Week-day Catechism*).

2. It must also be made interesting, so that the children may remember it well.

This exercise can be dull for the Catechists and very wearisome to the children, if it is conducted in a dry and monotonous manner. But it can be very interesting and even very amusing, if there are children who repeat well, and a Catechist who knows how to question; *but this is very rare.*

For this purpose, every child should be questioned, and as often as possible, so that all are kept continually awake.

Children who do not know must be asked once, twice, three times following, to oblige them to learn better.

It is a good plan to write on the spot and exactly, notes of the different questions, on a list *ad hoc*, against the name of each child; and to keep this list carefully, so as to be able to trace closely the negligence or the progress of each one.[1]

[1] When the children do not know their lessons, they must never be allowed to make excuses aloud, from their seats, or to answer in any way whatever. Such liberty would very soon degenerate into temper and impertinence. It is the business of the Catechist who is nearest the child to listen to his whispered excuse, and to repeat it aloud if he thinks it well to do so.

You can see how important these notes will be to refer to, above all at the time for admitting the children to the first Communion; for if a child must be refused, by showing him the notes upon his repetition, you can give him the proofs of his idleness and his unfitness.

3. It is also necessary that the interrogation be conducted in a quick and animated manner, and that the Catechist, while he is questioning one child, shall know the name of the next he is going to question.[1] There must always be some one speaking, either the Catechist asking, or the child answering; there must be no break, no languor; no remark except a quick word of encouragement or blame, according as the child has answered well or ill.

4. And this is itself very important; it is by knowing how to give praise[2] or blame at the right moment, and thus exciting emulation among the children, that an intelligent and bright-tempered Catechist can make the questioning very pleasant.

5. The marks for every child questioned, good, bad, or indifferent, are set down in numbers: number 5 signifies *very good;* it should be given very rarely, and thus it will be valued. "Let us see, my children, who will have number 5 to day?—You, my child, you will only have number 4 to-day. —It is right, but you did not answer clearly enough, too fast, —you have missed a word,—you have altered one.—Oh, my child, I am very sorry, but you would have had number 5, if you had not forgotten so-and-so," &c., &c.

Such words, said by the questioner at the right moment, and with a bright and lively tone and manner, excite the self-respect of the children wonderfully, and encourage them to do

[1] In questioning the children, it should not be in alphabetical order, nor by taking the seats in turn, for fear it should make the children less attentive. But you should question them sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other, going suddenly from one seat to another, so as to keep all the children on the watch. (*Méthode de Saint-Sulpice.*)

[2] "Praise them a little, and encourage those who are naturally timid," says M. de la Chétardie; "never let them get confused, nor be laughed at." . . . "Sometimes it is a good thing to help them on, by saying the first word of the answer oneself, and even saying some encouraging words to the child." (*Méth. de S. Sulp.*)

well. By these means, simple and even puerile as perhaps they may seem in themselves, two hundred children can be kept on the alert, on the watch, through twenty or five-and-twenty minutes of questioning.

6. According to S. François de Sales' precept, you must make it a strict point that the child makes the sign of the Cross reverently, saying the words aloud, "*Formato signo crucis, et prolatis altâ voce verbis, eam Catechismi partem quæ assignata fuerit recitabunt.*" (*Mod. Catéchismi.*)

7. The baptismal name of the child should always precede his surname; it is his name as a Christian.

To call a child only by his surname, we will not venture to say that there is something rough and rude about it, but we will say that it is at least less pleasant, and less courteous.

On the other hand, for myself, I have never used the baptismal name alone; it is too familiar.

To call them *Monsieur*, *Mademoiselle*, has nothing paternal in it; it puts them at too great a distance for a Catechism, which is a family.

To say *my child*, and then to call them by their Christian name and surname, is the only way which pleases them, and the only way which corresponds to their feelings and to their confidence, and to what they are at the Catechism.

My friends, *my dear friends*, though there is a little worldly familiarity about it, may sometimes pass in familiar addresses to boys.

The *Méthode de S. Sulpice* enjoins the Catechist to know the names of the children exactly, and to pronounce them well, and it rightly and delicately says that "if the Catechist spoils the names, he disturbs his audience, he needlessly humiliates the children whom he thus names, and sometimes in this way makes them have a secret dislike to the Catechism."

I could enter here, gentlemen, into many other details, but I have said enough to show you how true it is to say, that to find a Catechist who knows well how to question, is not an easy thing.

But I must speak to you now of the exercise which more

than all else varies the questioning and makes it interesting. This is the *Jeu de bons points*, "game of good marks"; a most important exercise.

II.

THE "JEU DE BONS POINTS."

If I say, gentlemen, that the *Jeu de bons points* is an important exercise, it is not only because it is a very pleasant one to the children, and gives a great interest to the questioning; but first and above all because it is a means of repeating to them over and over again, and making them repeat to themselves, the truths which one desires to engrave in their memories, and that without any weariness at the repetition; and again because it gives the opportunity of explaining to the children in detail the text of the Catechism, and the *meaning of the words, of every word;* and this is certainly the most necessary and perhaps the most difficult thing which has to be done in a Catechism.

I venture to ask you, gentlemen, to give all your attention to this. I said the *meaning of the words* and *of every word*, and I repeat it; for, in fact, the Catechist has to teach his children the whole of an unknown, difficult, and mysterious language, *the language of the Church*. This language, which speaks of all the mysteries, all the most august truths, both dogmatic and moral, is all contained in this little book which is called the Catechism. To teach the Catechism, to do the work of the Catechism, is therefore to teach the language of the Church; it is to teach the children readily to *understand* and to speak this sublime, unique, and immortal language, which when all other languages cease will not cease, because it expresses eternal truths, and makes the words of the kingdom of heaven re-echo among men.

The principal work of the Catechist, therefore, is to explain the meaning of every word of the Catechism, and never to let one pass without being certain that the children quite understand it. I venture to say that in this respect, the most skilful Catechists deceive themselves: they conclude too easily

that the children understand the meaning of the words: it is to no purpose that they may recite from memory with the greatest assurance; my long experience has convinced me that the children both in town and country do not, of themselves, thoroughly understand the *precise meaning* of *any expression* in the Catechism. Thus, even in the first page, in the article called "Preliminary Lesson," the following words would need to be explained: *to create, to bring into the world, to know, to love, to serve, to obtain, eternal life, to expound a doctrine, to teach a creed*, &c., &c.

Of necessity this must be done under one form or another, and the form of the *jeu de lons points* seems to be the best, because it excites the interest, the curiosity and the emulation of the children in the highest degree.

It is a game, rightly called a *jeu, alea*, between the Catechist and a child; a game as to who shall win or lose the good mark, that is to say, a certain reward.

This *jeu* is played with the children who have the best known by heart and repeated the exact words of the Catechism during the questioning; who have gained the number 5, or at least number 4.

The Catechist, who here takes the lead, proposes four or five questions to one of these children, either upon the exact meaning of the words he has just repeated, or otherwise upon a mystery, or upon one of the proofs of religion, or on a dogmatic or moral truth; but always on a plan which is carried out from the beginning of the year to the end.

The questions ought to be short, distinct, clear, and precise, and generally they should hint at and lead on to the answers. This is generally very difficult to do well, more difficult even than the chief instruction, and should be perfectly prepared.

I have said it is a game; it might also be called a contest, a struggle. The Catechist proposes the questions one after another to the children, to each according to their capacity, in a brisk, animated manner, almost as a sort of challenge. There results from this something like a combat, in which an intelligent child is sometimes almost driven to extremity; and when the Catechist knows how to keep up the interest, you

may see that all the listeners are taking a part, their attention is quickened, and they are held as it were in suspense from the uncertainty of the victory. (*Méthode de S. Sulpice.*)

Sometimes the Head Catechist seems to find a difficulty as to granting the good mark; sometimes he says to the questioner, "What do you think of it, sir? Has Leon —— won his good mark?" The questioner decides, I need hardly say, *nearly* always in favour of the child.

I may add that it was S. François de Sales who appointed this exercise; these are the exact words of the rule which he wrote on this subject: "*Prior* (the Head Catechist) *consignabit responsuros et disputatores, eligetque semper perspicaciores et magis idoneos.*"

The Catechist also, to put more interest into this exercise, sometimes engages several champions in the contest. He begins by proposing a question to one among the children of the Catechism who are the most forward, and who know the most; then he calls up a child from those who are not so advanced; and finally from the most skilful of all he calls up a third child, and desires him to decide which of the two has answered the best.

I repeat that nothing is more difficult to do well; and thus the task of conducting it is generally reserved for the Head Catechist. But whoever the Catechist may be who has the charge of it, it is very important for its success, that the questions, even the most simple ones, to be put to the child, should be well settled beforehand, and even written out: even the most experienced Catechists do not exempt themselves from this precaution, and without it the questions or the objections will not be clear enough for the child to understand at once, nor will they be distinct enough for him easily to answer them rightly.

I find also, in the *Méthode de Saint-Sulpice*, some excellent recommendations as to this exercise; I cannot do better than give them to you.

1. To avoid *idle*, or *too subtle* questions, and above all such as might awaken in the child's mind dangerous questions, answers, or reflections; such as *doubts upon the faith, a*

misplaced curiosity on religion, or any thoughts contrary to good morals.

2. To vary often the manner of proposing the questions; for this variety takes off the monotony of it, and amuses and interests; it is good even sometimes to say some little things to enliven the children; the Catechism does not demand the gravity of the pulpit; still it does not admit of ridiculous anecdotes, or laughable stories, or common and unseemly jokes.

3. That *the questions be so put that the children can answer them.* This recommendation may seem superfluous, but yet it is very necessary; for it is nearly always the fault of the Catechist if these poor children do not open their mouths; it is often because the question is *above their capacity*, or *not well expressed; and then the children lose heart, they no longer make any effort to give answers*, but merely listen to the Catechist. On the contrary, if they have quite understood the question, they are pleased, they answer well, these little successes give them courage, and little by little they grow accustomed to use their understandings, even in very difficult things. I have had some wonderful experiences of this. I remember a little girl, then eleven years and a half old, now a very great lady, to whom I put a question during this exercise on the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. I had said before that the Son, the Second Person, was the eternal Wisdom of the Father. When I asked her how it could be that the three Divine Persons were equal in everything, and in particular how it could be that the Son, the Second Person, was not younger than His Father, the child replied, without hesitation, "*It is because, Monsieur, the Father could not exist one moment without His Eternal Wisdom.*" Tertullian and Bossuet say no more.

The Catechist, therefore, who is really interested in the progress of those whom he teaches, knows how to appreciate all these things, and forgets nothing which can be of help. He first gives the children easy questions, he tells them and he shows them that they understand what they are asked, he puts them in the way, he hints the answer in the question, he praises when they answer well, and he uses all sorts of

small ways to open their mind, to make them exercise their judgment, and thus to lift them up gradually to the perception of the highest truths.

Sometimes, however, it is useful to ask a question you know they will not be able to answer; for instance, when you desire them to give particular attention to an important explanation, to one which is difficult to grasp.

4. It may be said that the *jeu de bons points* is most perfectly carried out when the child has said a great deal, and the Catechist very little; but it must be added that it is a perfection very hard to be met with.

5. To succeed perfectly in this very difficult but very important exercise, it is above all things necessary that the Catechist should be *master of himself*, that he should have entire presence and freedom of mind, and thus he will be able to keep up the interest. The success of the exercise demands that he shall not hurry, that he shall not say too much, that he shall enjoy it when the child says something good, and that he shall make others enjoy it; that he shall be skilful in taking advantage of good and correct answers, that he shall make much of them by repeating them word for word, distinctly and intelligibly, with a clear voice; that he shall skilfully supply what is wanting in them, so that the children will be quite astonished to find they have answered so well; that he shall change and vary his questions as he pleases, quickly; that he shall put them in a brisk and striking way, when the answers of the children give him the opportunity. Now all this requires in the Catechist great presence of mind, and it is all the more necessary for him, that he may have his eye over the whole Catechism while he speaks, and keep order there the whole time.

THIRD DISCOURSE.

THE INSTRUCTION.

It has been often enough said that Instruction is not education; it is not the end, it is only a means; but it is a very powerful means, and most important; and therefore from the first I have called the Instruction one of the principal and essential exercises of the Catechism; I will add now, gentlemen, that it is one of the most difficult.

For what has to be done is, for half an hour, to fix the attention of a great number of children, most of them very giddy, on most serious subjects, both of dogma and of morals; to bring the most abstract truths and the highest mysteries within reach of these young and volatile minds; and finally so to engrave them in their memory that they shall never forget them; and at the same time to make them dear to their heart, and bring them to take these great truths as the rule of their conduct. For the Instruction, though its immediate end may be to teach religion, to fix firmly the truths of the faith, and to impress them on the understanding, must nevertheless not neglect persuasion, or if need be, exhortation; it is indeed, if the subject is suitable, a very good way of instructing, and whatever may be the subject, it is always the best way with which to conclude.

It has been said, and rightly, that it is easier to find a preacher who can preach a good sermon, than a Catechist who can give a good Instruction. For my own part, I have no doubt about it.

What must be done then, gentlemen, to provide good

Instructions in a Catechism? I will try to tell you in the simplest and clearest way.

There must be: (1st) *A good plan of Instructions*, for a whole year, if it is the little Catechism; for two years, if it is the Catechism of the first Communion; for three or perhaps four years, if it is a Catechism of Perseverance.

I will begin by the Catechism of Perseverance:

1st *year.* DOGMA: the history of Religion and of the Church; the Mysteries.

2nd *year.* MORALS: the Commandments of God and of the Church; virtues and vices.

3rd *year.* GRACE: Prayer and the Sacraments.

4th *year.* SACRIFICE: Sacrifices in general; the old Sacrifices; the Sacrifice of the Cross; the Sacrifice of the Mass.

The following is the plan for two years for the Catechism of first Communion:

1st *year.* Instructions on the whole history of Religion and the Church.

2nd *year.* Instructions on all the chapters of the diocesan Catechism.

The following plan is for one year only for the little Catechism:

The Catechist explains literally every time, one or two lessons out of the large diocesan Catechism, or from the little Catechism; generally, that which has just been repeated.

2. But it is not enough to have a good plan of Instructions, every Instruction must besides be perfectly *prepared.*

It is impossible to give a good Catechetical Instruction without having prepared it with the greatest care. For my own part, gentlemen, it would be infinitely easier for me to preach a sermon or a *prône* without preparation. A good Catechetical Instruction demands of the most skilful, four, five, or six hours of preparation. I have sometimes had two or three days of continuous work, sometimes a whole week, in preparation for certain very difficult or very special Instructions.

I shall perhaps astonish you, gentlemen, when I tell you that I wrote out all the Catechetical Instructions, not only those which I gave myself, but also those of my colleagues;

I have them still, written entirely by my own hand, each of fifteen or twenty pages; and that for four years: all the Instructions on dogma, on morals, then those on the Sacraments, and on Sacrifice.

I wrote out also all my Homilies, all the little sermons which I used at the Catechism. I ought to add that I did not say them, nor know them, by heart, except sometimes the Homilies and sermons on the festivals. I do not pretend, gentlemen, to set myself as a model. I only tell you simply what I did. But what I do maintain is, that if an Instruction is not properly prepared, it runs a great risk of being vague, wordy, and wearisome.

In order that the Instructions and the Homilies may be prepared *with care*, and in such a way that they will be really *useful* to the children, it is very important that the Catechist who is to give either the one or the other, be given notice of it *at least eight days beforehand*.

A better way still, and one which ought to be followed, is that the first Sunday in each month, or even at the beginning of the year, the Head Catechist divides out among his fellow-workers the Instructions and Homilies for the month, or even as far as possible for the whole year; by this means, each knowing well beforehand what he will have to do, will be able to prepare for it with all the care in his power.

3. The Instruction ought to be *short*, from twenty to five-and-twenty minutes in the little Catechisms, half an hour in the Catechisms of Perseverance.

Length in Instructions is a very common fault, but a very sad one, and this fault generally arises from want of preparation. The Catechist who has not sufficiently prepared himself launches out into superfluous details, continually repeats himself, goes back again uselessly over what he has already said; and if the limit fixed for the time of the Instruction is rigorously kept to, as it ought to be, he is obliged to come down from the pulpit, his Instruction cut short and spoiled.

We know how S. François de Sales complained of the length of sermons. *When the vine produces much wood*, he said, then

it is that *it bears less fruit.* And also, he said, that when a discourse was too long, "the end made you forget the beginning."

I may add that brevity is above all necessary in the Instructions given to children, for, as Fénélon says, their mind is like a vase with a very small opening, which can only be filled drop by drop. If the Instruction is to be of use to them, they must be told very few things at a time. "Believe me," said S. François de Sales to the Bishop of Belley, "I tell you this from experience, from long experience; the more you say, the less they will retain; the less you say, the more they will profit; by dint of burdening your hearers' memory, you break it down, just as lamps are extinguished if we put too much oil in them, or as plants are suffocated if we water them too much. *Indifferent preachers are acceptable, provided they are short, and excellent ones are a burden if they are too long.*" We may say the same of Catechists; and for this reason the Council of Trent, in the decree which binds all pastors to instruct the people, recommends brevity and also simplicity of language: *Cum brevitate et facilitate sermonis.*

4. In the first place the Instruction ought to be *well divided.*

This is the important point, gentlemen, if you would be short, be clear, be interesting, and be sound.

You should begin by recapitulating clearly and briefly the subject and the divisions of the last Instruction. Then give out, with the same clearness, and very slowly, the subject of the new Instruction; then point out very distinctly the divisions into two, three, or four heads, generally in the form of questions; for instance, you are giving an Instruction on grace, you will give the children these five questions:

(1) Can any one be converted and obtain his salvation without grace?

(2) Has every one sufficient grace to convert him and to enable him to obtain salvation?

(3) With grace, is it easy to be converted and to obtain salvation?

(4) Can any one resist grace?

(5) Is it a very grievous thing to resist grace?

Questions presented in this way are much more easily caught by the children, going straight to their understanding, than if put in an abstract form; such as, in the first place, we will speak of the necessity of grace, &c.; in the second, of the sufficiency of grace, &c.

But in whatever form you put it, the division must be simple and clear, and given out so slowly that the children may be able to write it out correctly, as from dictation.

Otherwise you put these young intellects to the torture; they wish to follow you and they cannot; soon they no longer know where they are, they understand nothing that is said to them, and in despair they will sometimes even shed tears. I remember once that one of my colleagues had forgotten to give out the division of his Instruction; the children, who were taking notes, were so disheartened that I saw one of them dissolved in tears. I immediately let the Catechist know; he gave out his division, and as they came to understand, their faces lighted up again with joy.

5. The Instruction must be perfectly *clear* both as to the groundwork and in every detail.

You will allow me to remind you, gentlemen, of the precept of Quintilian, "*Non ut intelligere possit, sed ne omnino non intelligere non possit, curandum.*" (Quint., lib. VIII. c. ii.)

It is not only necessary that the child understands, but that it shall not be possible for him not to understand.

There are three very efficacious ways of doing this:

I. Things must be told simply; as they are, not laboured nor exaggerated; one does sometimes exaggerate with children, but it is wrong, it only troubles them and puts a strain on their minds.

II. Things must be said in their most natural, most suitable order, nothing brusque or forced, nothing contradictory; above all avoid the confusion of digressive phrases or parentheses. Nearly all young Catechists are apt to fall into this fault.

III. The greater number are unfortunately lavish in useless words; they do not know how to cut short a sentence, or

how to abridge it; and hence we have lengthiness, redundance, and confused expressions.

"Children," says Fleury, "cannot take in several ideas at once, nor understand their relation one with another; they do not speak continuously for long, and their sentences are short. In speaking to them, we ought to imitate them, speak in short sentences, and be brief and exact."

6. The general rule for an instructor is to avoid all words which teach nothing to his hearers. A Catechist ought to put himself into the place of the children to whom he is going to speak, and compose his Instruction in their presence, as if they were really there; he ought, so to speak, to come away from his own mind, and to get into theirs, so as better to realize to himself how things appear to them; he ought calmly to examine if it is likely that they will catch what he is meaning they shall understand, and what is the best way of making it intelligible to them.

7. He should always remember that he is speaking to young minds, in whom the reasoning power is weak, but the imagination strong, their feelings are quick, their passions all alive. Hence we conclude:

First, that it is not suitable, in dealing with them, to use formal reasonings or arguments, such, for example, as Bourdalone uses; but that it is far better to set forth one's subject in a simple, easy manner, though always quite regular, but without confining oneself to the rigorous formulas of a mode of speech which the children will not be able to comprehend.

Only it must be well understood that this only refers to the form, not to the thing itself; good reasons must always be given for this, even with children.

Secondly, to bring the truth within their reach, it ought to be brought home to them by illustrations and comparisons taken from things which they know, and which interest them.

"The book of nature," says S. François de Sales, "is good for similitudes, for comparison of the less with the greater, and for a thousand other things. The early Fathers are full of it, as is Holy Scripture in a thousand places:—"*Vade ad formicam*," "*Sicut gallina congregat pullos suos*," "*Quemadmodum desiderat cervus*," "*Quasi struthio in deserto*," "*Considerate lilia agri.*"

"It was the greatest pleasure," says the old biographer of S. François de Sales, "to hear how familiarly he explained to the children the rudiments of the faith; at every turn, abundant illustrations were on his lips to explain what he meant."

Moreover, care must be taken, as every one will understand, that the illustrations do not lead away from the subject, but on the contrary, that they bring it home; therefore they must be short, clear, and quite appropriate. They must be given also in sentences varied in form, they must be brought in naturally, as for instance: *Look at it in this way, fancy to yourselves, suppose now*, or, better still, the form of interrogation, as *Who does not know? who has not seen? do not we see this in Nature?* (*Méthode de S. Sulpice.*)

8. It often happens that young Catechists, coming from the seminary or from their theological studies, are disheartened when they find themselves face to face with children, and particularly with country children. They are tempted to think that it is not possible to get spiritual ideas into such rough and limited intellects. Well, let me tell them: *There are very few children or ignorant people who are not capable of being thoroughly instructed, if you adapt yourself to their powers.*

"Experience shows," says Bossuet himself, "that provided you take the right way, and while exciting in them a desire to learn, showing yourself always ready to instruct them, you may bring them on very much in the knowledge of God. There are certain villages which, simply because they have had some good Curés who have devoted themselves to teaching them, have made such great progress in Christian learning that one is surprised; so that when one hears such a cry about the incapacity of the people, one cannot but fear it is only an excuse for not taking the trouble of teaching. It is quite true that it demands much trouble."

I may say, gentlemen, that I have never known children better instructed in their religion than those in the remotest mountains of Savoy. It is true that, thanks to the zeal of young vicars who devote themselves to keeping school, there are more children who know how to read in Savoy than in any other country of Europe,[1] but it must be added that

[1] Written in 1868.

these vicars and their Curés teach the Catechism admirably, and take all needful pains about it.

9. The instruction must be *interesting* and *animated*. The great art is to be oneself at one's ease, to look bright, to have a cheerful voice and a natural manner; then the children will themselves be at ease, they will attend joyfully, and without any effort their hearts and minds will open.

One must even sharpen their attention by some original and lively changes of style, which will keep them in suspense; sometimes we must (as is rightly said by the *Méthode de S. Sulpice*) *surprise and refresh them pleasantly* by some unexpected sally: we need not even, now and then, avoid a word which will make them smile, only there must still be calmness and propriety.

Sometimes one can propose *little cases of conscience, and give wrong decisions on purpose, so that the children may set one right.* Nothing pleases them more.

10. Another way of gaining the attention of children, very important, but too often forgotten, is to work upon their passions, to set them in motion, to turn them towards virtue and truth as strongly as they are of themselves inclined to vice or error. For this purpose, you must carefully watch your young audience, you must study their feelings, and, if possible, read their very hearts, a thing indeed which is easier than you may think.

S. Augustine, in his *Treatise on the Teaching of Christian Doctrine*, remarks how "important it is, when speaking to children, or when the children answer, to watch them, to see if they understand, if they are taking in what is said to them, what impression is being made on them, and," he adds, "it can easily be seen by the tone, the manner, the attitude, the play of their features." But of course this watching must be done quite naturally, and without the children being aware of it.

S. Augustine adds that Catechists who know their instruction by heart and repeat it, lose this advantage. "*Solet natu suo significare avida multitudo cognoscendi, utrum intellexerit. Quod in potestate non habent, qui præparata, et ad*

verbum memoriter retenta, pronuntiant." (S. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, lib. IV, c. iv.)

11. The Instruction is often improved by the Catechist interrupting himself to question the children, making them speak themselves, making them tell him what is the subject, what the divisions, and the chief details they have just heard; and at the same time it is an excellent way of making sure that they have listened well and understood rightly.

Not that he must let the Instruction consist entirely of questions and answers; the Instruction is the solemn teaching of religion, and it would not come thus with sufficient authority. No, the speaking and teaching must come first, *tanquam potestatem habens*, and then the questioning of the children on what has been said.

This was our Lord's own way.

I have not quoted His example to you, gentlemen, for a long time; I am glad to do it now. How often, after having taught the people with all the authority of His divine office, either in a continuous discourse, as that on the Mount, or in more private conversation, or in parables, how often did He not put the question to His disciples, or to some of those who were in the crowd around Him, perhaps Pharisees and doctors of the law, or young men, women or children, "*Have ye understood all these things?*" And it is remarkable also that He not only questioned them, but let them put questions to Him, which He answered; thus, one day, when speaking of salvation and of ways of perfection, a young man came to Him and said, "Master, what must I do to attain eternal life?" Our Lord replies, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Then He adds, speaking with complete authority, "If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow Me."

Again, another day, when about to give His disciples the highest teaching of the Gospel, to instruct them in His Eternal Sonship and His Divinity, He questions them in these words: "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" His disciples answer Him, "Some say that Thou art

John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets." "But whom say ye that I am?" And Simon Peter replies, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

From this Divine example you may see that nothing is more fitted to instil moral truths in the mind than these dialogues, their liveliness and quickness forcing the speakers to bring to bear all the powers of their understanding to arrive at the truth.

The Catechist can sometimes begin by questioning, and then conclude by speaking with all the authority of his office; this, again, our Lord did with the Samaritan woman, in the instruction, I will say the Catechism, which He gave her on grace by Jacob's Well.

In short, gentlemen, follow our Lord in the temple, on the banks of the Jordan, in a ship, or on the mountain, you will see that He gives His instructions always with entire authority, but at the same time in familiar conversations, enlivened by frequent questions, by quick answers, by examples, comparisons, parables, by facts of history.

In conclusion, I should like to tell you what a holy and learned Bishop, whose loss the Church is even now regretting, said lately. It was in that country of Savoy, where the Catechism is not only held for children, but every Sunday for all the faithful gathered together, who feel a pride in being questioned and in answering:

"Make those you wish to instruct speak, make them speak a good deal; ask the young man for the explanations which the child has not been able to give, and ask the old man for those which puzzled the young man. If, as is already the case in a certain number of parishes, you can succeed in inspiring all the inhabitants with the desire and the habit of taking part in these spiritual conversations, then be sure light will begin to shine on their understandings, religious knowledge will make marked progress in their families."

12. But for this, gentlemen, there is one essential condition, which, with Fénélon and S. Augustine, I have already pointed out.

This condition is, not to know, *not to repeat by heart.*

S. Augustine rightly remarks that a Catechist who gives his Instruction from memory is not free to stop and recall what he has said by quick and sudden questions; and, therefore, though it is a great advantage to prepare beforehand and even to make notes of, not only the questions to be put to the children, but also of the whole Instruction, yet it does not follow that there is an equal advantage in repeating it from memory. On the contrary, the Catechist will find himself embarrassed by questions and answers which he is not expecting; he will not be able to profit by the opportunity which the children will sometimes give him of saying very useful things which he had not foreseen, but which quite belong to the subject. And, finally, he will be the slave of his poor manuscript, tied to what he has written, not daring even to take a step in another direction, though he may see that the one he has taken is not the best for bringing the children to the point he desires, nor for making them understand what he is explaining.

The authority and reasons, gentlemen, of S. Augustine are decisive, but yet I hope also you will remember your own experience; for there is hardly any one who has not felt all the inconveniences of a method which condemns a preacher painfully to burden his memory, to recite his Instruction like a scholar saying his lesson, and sometimes to be obliged to go back several words to find the thread of his discourse again. It is a grievous method, always more or less restraining any action, and taking away all the freedom of a natural, bright, and attractive manner, and to such a degree that the Catechist cannot give way to any unusual impulse without being in danger of losing the thread of his thoughts; while, on the other hand, he who does not learn by heart has presence of mind, he expresses himself naturally, he does not speak as if he were declaiming, everything flows easily, his expressions are animated, sometimes perhaps unpolished, but always full of life. And, moreover, he regulates things according to the impression which he sees they are making on his audience; he sees what their minds are taking in and what they are not

grasping; he takes it up in another way, he puts it in another aspect, uses more touching illustrations; thus he prepares, he watches, he follows his own progress in their souls, and ends by nearly always attaining his object, which is to persuade and to convince.

13. But again, gentlemen, when Fénélon and S. Augustine demand that the Catechist shall not learn and repeat by heart, it is very important to remark that these two great men do not the least in the world dispense from a very earnest preparation. Fénélon, in particular, constantly insists on this point. "*The greater number of men who do not learn by heart, do not,*" he says, "*prepare themselves enough; the subject must be studied with deep meditation,*" so as to mark beforehand the reasons which can convince, the very manner which can influence, and everything arranged in luminous order.

What Fénélon requires above all, in those who are charged with the ministry of catechising, is *thoroughness of knowledge, of the principles, the ground of things.* "There are many," he says, "who know how to speak, but they do not know what they ought to say; they weaken the highest truths, because they know neither the principles of sound philosophy, nor those of evangelic doctrine; thus, notwithstanding their brilliant language and their clever expressions, it is evident that their mind is empty; any one can see that they have had a great deal of trouble in finding materials for their Instructions; that *they do not speak because they are filled with truths, but that they look for truths when they want to speak.*"

If, gentlemen, you would understand thoroughly the teaching and system of S. Augustine and Fénélon on this point, consider the following words from the Archbishop of Cambrai; they describe the whole thing with a force, a clearness and precision which cannot be improved upon.

"I suppose," he says, "a man filled with his subject, who meditates deeply on all the principles of it, in all their bearings, who has them in order in his mind, who prepares the strongest expressions by which he can bring his subject home, who arranges all his proofs, who prepares a certain number of telling illustrations; in short, a man who knows what he has to say, and the place where each thing should come in, but who

knows it by the working of his understanding rather than by an effort of memory, although his memory helps him greatly; only he has not learned it by heart, not even a syllable."

There is nothing to add to these words of Fénélon. You see then, gentlemen, that he is not thinking of a man who carelessly extemporizes, who goes into the pulpit, opens his lips without knowing what he is going to say, and often comes down again without knowing what he has said. No, Fénélon did not treat the apostolic ministry thus lightly; it was even because of his veneration for this ministry that he would not condemn those who prepare themselves to recite the Divine Word by heart like a lesson, from memory; he would not hinder a Catechist from writing out his Instructions, from arranging all the parts exactly, or even from settling beforehand all the illustrations and principal expressions; simply he demands that he shall not learn it by heart, *word for word*, thus depriving himself of the power of adding on the spot anything which the occasion may demand, or the sight of his hearers and other things might put into his mind.

And thus laid down, I see no possible objection to this method.

14. So much then, gentlemen, for the form and also for the substance. As to the form, the Instruction must be short, well divided, clear, interesting, and animated, sometimes broken into dialogue, but always given with authority.

As to the substance, I will confine myself to adding one word to what Fénélon has said; in these days more than ever, the basis of catechetical instruction must be theologically exact and sound.

It has been rightly remarked that in this country, and in these days, it is a solid, strong, and enlightened belief which is wanting; a faith which is deep, generous, and exalted. Even in Christian schools, we too often find piety without any serious foundation; a piety without real religion, a piety and a faith merely of routine, of habit, of feeling; nothing great, nothing strong, nothing deep. What the Council of Trent calls the root and foundation of justification, is weak in them.

Therefore in the Catechisms the teaching must be instructive, very seriously instructive.

By this I do not mean that the children should be taught controversially; another extreme which could only ruin the little faith which they have. I mean that they should be treated like baptized children, who have already the seed of faith within them; whose understanding is beginning to develop, whose good-will we are certain of; and that they should be taught strongly, largely, magnificently even, though always simply, the dogmatic and moral truths of religion. I mean that they should be filled with the knowledge of the faith, that they should be penetrated, laid hold of, delighted even, by the fullness of truth and light, by the fullness of authority, but all this without any controversy.

No doubt, Instruction is not everything, I have said so often, but it is very important; and very often it is badly done even by those, I think I may say, above all by those who confine themselves to making the Catechism merely an *Instruction.*

15. In conclusion, let me gather something from Fénélon, and give you some of the counsels of this great Bishop, on the manner of presenting Christian doctrine to children.

I shall then sum up all I have said to you on this point.

Fénélon would not have the children plunged into abstract knowledge; on the contrary, he desired that all learned investigations should be avoided, all the subtleties of the schools which only tend to confuse the truths of the faith in these young minds, and also all abstractions and a multitude of metaphysical terms and phrases which would repel them.

And, therefore, he wished that they should not be confined to repeating the Catechism, which is theological and abstruse: "They do not understand these words," he said, "and if you accustom them to repeat without understanding, you have not brought them on at all." He desired, therefore, that the letter of the Catechism should be constantly explained in the most familiar words, with the most attractive and most telling expressions, and bringing them in again from time to time. He would have their minds helped by questions upon the very questions of the Catechism; so that thus they would be put in the way of finding out the truths and the answers at

their very source. "They will come to them," he says, "in this way better and more pleasantly, and they will be more deeply impressed in their soul."

He asks from the Catechists an extreme zeal and care in studying these young understandings, so that he may profit by every opening for bringing the divine Light to shine on them, "and gently to lead them to develop by themselves what as yet they have only seen indistinctly."

Above all, Fénélon recommends that children should be instructed by means of stories told to them.

"These stories," he says, "seem to lengthen the Instruction, but in reality they greatly shorten it, and take away the dryness of ordinary Catechisms. Of old, instruction was chiefly given by stories."

By this means, gentlemen, it is that Fénélon would have the origin and the course of religion opened out and shown to the children, and its foundations laid in their minds.

In fact, one must be profoundly ignorant of the very being of religion, not to see that it is entirely historical, a recital of facts; and let it not be thought from this that children should be plunged into the knowledge of history, nor that it requires very much study. No. "God, who knows best the spirit of man whom He has formed, has set religion in popular facts, which, very far from burdening simple folk, help them to grasp the mysteries and to retain them."

Fénélon asks, desires that Catechists should follow the Scripture method, should describe in the most glowing colours, should employ the most magnificent images, so as strongly to strike the imagination of the children. "Imagination," he says, "must be brought to help the understanding, to give them charming pictures of the truths of religion."

He went so far as to desire that nothing should be propounded to them which was not thus clothed in imagery. "It is thus," he said, "that you will be able to introduce the whole course of religion pleasantly into the minds of the children, and to give them noble ideas of it, which will never be effaced."

Finally, he demanded that attentive and searching care

which watches every opening that the mind and heart of the children can give, to find how the greatest truths can be brought to them. Above all, he earnestly recommends: "Tell them nothing new without making it familiar to them by some illustration they can understand. Go no further till you recognize by the tone of their voice and by their eyes, that they have caught the truth."

16. After these admirable counsels, you will not be surprised that Fénélon requires expressly that no one should content himself with giving the children a superficial knowledge of the truths of religion, but that all fundamental knowledge should be developed in their mind; that they shall be induced to read and understand the holy Gospels; that the Catechist should awaken in them a desire to know the reason of all the ceremonies and every word in the Divine office and the administration of the Sacraments; that the commandments should be thoroughly explained to them, and the precepts and counsels of Jesus Christ; that the authority of the Church, the Spouse of the Son of God and Mother of all the faithful, should be laid down as the *principal foundation of everything;* also the unbroken succession of ministers and of doctrine, and the manifest accomplishment of the Divine promises; then the mysteries, the actions, and the maxims of Jesus Christ; for, he says, "*The chief thing to bring continually before the eyes of the children is Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith, the centre of religion, and our only hope.*"

We must then, gentlemen, speak much to the children, who are wonderfully alive to the divine and human charms of the Saviour; we must speak to them much of the *person* of our Lord; set Him before their eyes; continually quote His actions and His words; make them, in short, love Him with that ardent and tender love which they feel for those whom they know, whom they speak to, and who are kind and good to them.

We must do the same in proportion for the Blessed Virgin, and all the great Saints.

17. Finally, Fénélon requires that all that is of the highest order in the law of God, in the institution of the Sacraments,

and in the practice of the ancient Church, should be taught to the children in the way that can most strongly impress them. He adds, "If we can give the children the means of regarding these great objects of the faith with pleasure, and judging common things by the standard of these high hopes, infinite difficulties of their future will be smoothed away."

This then, gentlemen, is what Fénélon meant the Instruction in the Catechism to be. Has he not really given the plan and laid the foundation beforehand of the great Catechisms of Perseverance, which are now acknowledged to be so indispensable for our youth?

Fénélon had this holy work so much at heart, he had so perfectly grasped its importance, not only for the towns, but for the humblest country places, that he does not hesitate to write these beautiful and solemn words to Bossuet, at the end of their celebrated controversy: "Your age and my infirmities, Monseigneur, will soon bring us before Him whom nothing can dazzle; too happy, in that final hour, if we have always done the work of the Catechism in our diocese, teaching the poor villagers to fear and to love God."

It is admirable to see so great a Bishop looking on the Catechism as the work *par excellence*, the highest work of the Episcopate, both for himself and his glorious brother!

In concluding this long discourse, gentlemen, I will add that one of the principal advantages which Fénélon believed would follow from well-conducted Catechisms, is that the children and the faithful get from them a taste, not for sermons full of empty and affected adornments, but for sensible and edifying discourses, such as good *prônes* and homilies, which explain clearly the letter of the Gospel: "Let the children see," he says, "how beautiful and touching these instructions are, in their simplicity."

It is in fact remarkable, and experience constantly shows it, that nowhere are *prônes* and pastoral instructions so eagerly attended as in parishes where there are good Catechisms of Perseverance.

It has been a great happiness to me, gentlemen, to be supported in all I have just said by the high authority of

Fénélon; but Fénélon himself, when, more than a hundred and fifty years ago, he gave such wise precepts for the religious teaching of youth, was only bringing into light the principles which governed this teaching in the first ages of the Church. He himself, that he might not seem to be making innovations, was obliged to recall to the memory of his contemporaries the examples of the Fathers, of S. Augustine in particular, and then going further back than S. Augustine, he showed that the admirable manner in which that Father desired to have the Catechism carried out (*De Catechizandis rudibus*) was not a method which originated with him, but *the method and the universal practice of the Church.*

Therefore, gentlemen, in following the method of Fénélon, we do but return to the method of primitive days, namely, to an apostolic tenderness, devotion, and, allow me to say, common-sense, as well as zeal.

But I conclude, and if this time I have a little abused your patience, I promise to be shorter at our next meeting.

FOURTH DISCOURSE.

THE HOMILY.

To-day, gentlemen, I propose to speak to you of the recitation of the holy Gospel, and of the *Homily*, which in all the Catechisms, great or little,[1] is given afterwards, occupying some minutes; and in connection with the Homily I shall also say something of *exhortations* of the same nature, of sermons or the *little religious discourses*, which are sometimes addressed to children.

I.

ON THE RECITATION OF THE HOLY GOSPEL.

There is a pious custom, gentlemen, existing still, not only in all Catechisms, but in all schools where religious instruction is still held in honour; the anxiety of pastors and the zeal of Christian masters seem to be on the watch for the first glimmer of dawning reason in the children, that they may fix their thoughts on the Gospel, and by the study of this sacred Book sanctify their earliest recollections.

Thus without effort the most remarkable events in the life of the Saviour are early imprinted on their mind; all the circumstances of His birth at Bethlehem; the virtues of His hidden life at Nazareth; the miracles, the discourses, the labours of His public life in Judea; the humiliation of His

[1] At the week-day Catechism, this Homily may usefully be exchanged for a reading, with comments, from the life of Decalogne, or some other young holy person.

passion at Jerusalem, the sorrows of His crucifixion and His death on Calvary; then the glory of His resurrection, and the magnificent spectacle of His ascension to the highest Heaven.

And who knows how the happy impressions of this touching and wonderful story may awaken and develop sentiments of piety in these young hearts, which have not yet been corrupted by vice; and not only this, but also that the solid foundations of a firm and enlightened faith may be laid in these young souls, who, ignorant as yet of the falsehoods of infidelity, have not lost the natural love of the truth?

You know, besides, gentlemen, what was the spirit of ancient Christianity, and what its practice on this head, and that the Fathers of the Church desired that it should form a very important part in the education of young children. S. Jerome recommends that they be made to learn it as soon as they are seven years old, as soon as reason begins to awake in them, and feeling; he would have them nourished with it every day, that it may become the treasure of their heart.[1]

In accordance with these ideas, in all Catechisms worthy of the name, the holy Gospel is early put into the hands of the children; they are made to learn with great care, and repeat with great reverence, the Gospel for the day, which serves as the text and groundwork of the Homily.

In the older Catechisms of Perseverance, one of the four Evangelists is sometimes chosen for each year, and learnt from one end to the other. Or perhaps, again, the harmony of the four Evangelists is given to the children to learn, either the whole or part.

These different ways of studying the holy Books give an interest and afford advantages on which, gentlemen, I need not dwell with you.

And, moreover, in well-conducted Catechisms, the children show great zeal in learning the Gospel. I have often known boys who said it every Sunday in French, in Latin, and in Greek. In Catechisms of Perseverance for girls, I have known

[1] *Quùm septimus annus exceperit, et cœperit erubescere, discat memoriter evangelia, sui cordis thesaurum faciat.* (*S. Hieronym. ad Gaudentium, de Pacatulæ infantulæ educatione.*)

the whole of the Passion repeated, in English, in Italian, in Spanish, and in Portuguese. All this, no doubt, is not necessary; but the important thing is, that from the time the children can read and begin to attend the little Catechisms, they should be made to learn the whole of the Gospels by heart; and you should be strict in requiring even the youngest of them to repeat the sacred text with much seriousness and reverence, and with the most exact accuracy.

But here, gentlemen, a serious difficulty arises, to which I must draw your attention. It has often been observed that children, who are little used to reflect, and who, besides, are wanting in that preliminary knowledge which, to be profitable, the holy Book requires, are repelled by the difficulties which they find in it; and then they learn the sacred text with much difficulty, or at any rate they remember it without any profit.

There are, it is true, many excellent works, where the text of the Gospels is explained both with unction and clearness, but the children could not procure these books because of their costliness and size; and moreover, to read them would require more time and more knowledge than they usually possess. I will even add that the greater number of these works would be no help to them, because they were not written for them, nor for their time; they would indeed be mostly useless to the generality of the faithful, because they were written in times more favourable to piety than those in which we live, and they suppose their readers to have already a deep knowledge of religion, such as hardly any one in these days possesses.

The only resource therefore which the children have, is the collection known by the title of the *Epistles and Gospels* for the Sundays and holy-days of the year, and this only contains a small number of the Gospels, generally translated in a very obscure manner, and with no note, reflection, or explanation whatever. If we add that this collection is often printed on rough paper, with coarse print, and almost always unsuitably bound, it is easy to see why the children do not sufficiently respect it, why too often they mix it up with their commonest

books, and reckon the study of it (we must say it because unfortunately it is true) among the least important and most wearisome of their studies. And consequently, there is not one of those who devote themselves to the ministry of catechising, who has not felt this serious difficulty a thousand times; seeing the children studying the holy Book with dislike or with dullness, never with piety; learning it like a secular lesson, repeating it like a foolish fable, and forgetting it almost directly; they have felt certain that anything they might say to them on the touching simplicity, the grandeur and sublimity of the holy Gospels, was to them like words spoken in the air, of which they neither felt the force nor perceived the truth.

It was with the desire of making this holy study less difficult and more profitable to this very interesting portion of Christ's flock, that some years since it was determined to publish several new translations of the Gospels, with an explanation of the most difficult passages. I take the liberty of calling your attention in particular to one of these translations, in the work of which I took part at the time, in concert with several of the most experienced Catechists[1] in Paris; its title is, "*Evangiles de toute l'année*," *made easy by literal notes.*

The title of this book shows that we have not confined ourselves to publishing the Gospels for each Sunday. In truth, long ago it was felt to be desirable that the collection put into the hands of the children should contain also the Gospels which the Church appoints to be read to the faithful every week-day, at holy Mass. For was it not to be regretted that the children never had the opportunity of hearing so many interesting portions of the Gospels, as for example, *The prodigal son, the rich man, the man born blind, the raising of Lazarus, &c.*?

As to the notes, we have thought it right to confine ourselves to what was most necessary for those we desired to teach. As for any critical difficulties, or difficulties of chronology or history, or in short of anything which a child would not

[1] Amongst them it will be sufficient to mention the Rev. Père Pétêtot, M. l'Abbé Lecourtier, M. l'Abbé de Borie, &c.

perceive, and the explanation of which would not interest him, we have said nothing, and I think a good and wise Catechist would also do well to say nothing about them.

Those amongst you, gentlemen, who are intending to adopt this little book for their Catechisms, will perhaps regret that the translators have almost entirely confined themselves to notes which only explain the text, and make the literal understanding of it easier to the children; without adding any pious explanations which might instil into them the taste and the love of the great truths of the holy Gospel, nor any practical reflections which would lead them to gather any fruit from the divine lessons which it contains; but you will be pleased to observe, that, having taken away all the principal difficulties of the letter, and brought the reading of the holy words within reach of the simplest, so that a child can study it without dislike, can understand it without effort, and can remember it without trouble, having done this, the actual object of our labour is attained. After this preliminary labour, there remains, I know well, a new and an equally important work to be carried on; but this we did not undertake; we considered that the place for this was specially in the public Catechisms, where the children would be repeating the holy Gospel; that there it will be your part to open out to them (hidden behind the veil of the sacred words which are now clear to them, and the parables which have already been explained) the holy and pure doctrine which is to nourish their soul, the high and profound mysteries which should lead their young minds captive to the obedience of faith; and finally, by the winning example of those heavenly graces which will touch their heart, to show them the solemn and sublime lessons of that divine morality which should make them henceforward pious, good and upright.

And this very thing, gentlemen, is the object of the Homily, which should follow the recitation of the Gospel, and this I now proceed to speak of.

II.

THE HOMILY.

THE Gospel having been carefully and literally explained, as I have just said, the Catechist begins his Homily, and speaks to the children for seven or eight minutes, with vigour and unction, *suaviter, fortiter ;* such is the proper character of the religious exhortation which is called a Homily.

It ought to be a very short, but very interesting address, and of such a nature as to make a strong impression on the children. You may throw your heart and soul into it. Warmth, emotion, and even great eloquence are all in place there. It is a little discourse, which, if good, may, according to the subjects and the festivals, be at one time gracious and gentle, at another strikingly and deeply solemn.

You will understand then, gentlemen, that the Homily is quite another thing from the Instruction. And yet, in the same way that the Instruction must often include spiritual exhortation, so the Homily must always include Instruction, it must always be based on a doctrine of the faith, on a very firm foundation. The Homily generally turns on a single truth, which it brings into full light, and sends, as it were all glowing and burning, like a dart, into the souls of the children.

The subject of the Homily may be, either the main point in the Mystery which is celebrated on that particular day, or the fact which is told in the Gospel. But a personal application to the children must never be forgotten, whether it be of the Mystery, or the fact in the Gospel ; for the object of the Homily is more than anything else, the moral improvement, the conversion of the children.

Hence it follows that the great truths, the last things, salvation, death, judgment ; the great virtues, humility, penitence, charity, the fear of God, and the motives given for it in Scripture ; the great sins, pride, sloth, disobedience, the spirit of independence, &c.—these are the best and most truly useful subjects to choose.

But though the Homily must always have a very solid groundwork, do not mistake, it must never be an actual Instruction; it must always be, above all, an Exhortation.

You need to use, gentlemen, a language which is quite fatherly, animated, warm, moving, and very practical; nothing purely speculative, nothing empty, nothing which does not apply directly to the children, nothing which will not touch them at some point.

It is an assault on souls, a sharp attack on hearts; thus the Homily should touch, should strike, should deeply move; it should tend to convert, to snatch away from sin, to excite to good; and with these objects it should leave on the conscience sometimes sweet and comforting impressions, sometimes strong and terrible ones.

Moreover, the motives given for conversion should be short, clear and striking, and expressed in a vigorous and telling manner.

You will understand, gentlemen, that if the Homily turns on the Gospel for the day, it can be given either by paraphrasing the whole Gospel, or by taking for your subject one particular point in it.

But in either case, you must give out clearly, both at the beginning and end of the Homily, the point you are aiming at, and the principal idea of the subject; otherwise, neither the necessary Instruction nor the earnest exhortation will remain in the children's minds.

The practical part must never be vague, always what is suitable for them, what goes straight to their needs; no empty declamations, what is said must always be to themselves and for them.

And thus, by this very thing, the Homily may sometimes become extremely vehement; but this should be chiefly when the elder Catechists and those in authority are speaking.

Still, even from the Head Catechist there should never be too bitter rebukes, or at least nothing like too direct, too personal reproofs, nothing which might embarrass the children in their relations with the Catechists, nothing which should be like the particular knowledge of a Confessor.

Whether in the Homily, or in other exhortations which belong to the Catechism, it must first of all be remembered that at that age the conscience is not formed; it is not perfectly formed even at the rather more advanced age of the Catechisms of Perseverance. The first Communion may touch the heart, but it does not always bring sufficiently deep feelings of religion; thus there may be piety of feeling, without a deep fear of God, or intense horror of evil.

The principal object of the Homilies, and of any preaching in the Catechisms, *ought to be* TO INSPIRE, *to excite* in these young souls, by earnest, clear, sound and vigorous words, THE FEAR OF GOD, and to FORM THEIR CONSCIENCE.

A long experience both of Catechisms and of young people, has taught me that this is the most necessary thing, even in Catechisms where piety seems most to flourish.

No doubt it belongs to Confessors, more than all others, to form the conscience of the children, but preaching can help powerfully towards it, by making them know and thoroughly appreciate the law of God; by making them feel the evil of the dangerous circumstances, the perils their souls will encounter in the world; they can be filled with horror at all that degrades the heart, that causes the loss of grace, that leads to eternal death.

I do not hesitate, gentlemen, to say that everywhere and always, in every form of Instruction, we must apply ourselves, above all things, to lay the foundation of the children's piety upon the fear of God—I speak here of filial, not of servile fear—and unfold to them all that is said of it in the Scriptures, and the motives given for it; they must be exhorted to fly from occasions of falling, to fight against their passions, to root out their vices, to correct their smallest faults; it is thus that evil will be attacked in its root, and the cause of all sins will be cut off.

Any other sort of language with them is useless. And to speak for a moment of a necessary detail, if the Catechist is led by his subject to speak of that vice which S. Paul desires should be not named amongst the Saints, let him never forget to do it in an impressive manner, clearly, with dignity, and

with a grave accent of reprobation, such as will elevate and purify the hearts of his hearers.

Finally, since all impressions, however strong, last but a short time with children, it is necessary often to go over the same truths, to present them, in the same Homily, under different forms, and if they are important, to treat of them from time to time, regularly every year.

It is needless to say that for the Homilies, as for the Instructions, it is important, in each Catechism, that a plan be sketched out beforehand, marking all the subjects which will be treated of in the course of the year; otherwise there is the chance of treating the same subject several times, and of leaving out other very important ones, for a considerable time, sometimes even for several years following.

It is chiefly on certain festivals that the Homily may and should treat of dogmatic subjects; but it should then always end with a moral application well brought home, and sufficiently developed, such as will send the children to their consciences, will oblige them to reflect on it seriously in their hearts. I say, *sufficiently developed;* it is highly necessary with children. A Catechist having read his Homily to M. Tronson, Superior of the Seminary of S. Sulpice: "Your moral application," said he, "is too short to have any power in moving and kindling the insensible hearts of your hearers. It is gone too soon, like a match, or a flash of powder."

I will add, moreover, gentlemen, that if the words of Catechists are to have authority and influence souls, they must SPEAK WELL: "*You may tell of marvels, but if you tell them not well, you have told nothing,*" says S. François de Sales; "*say little, and say it well, that is a great deal.*"

True; but understand, gentlemen, what is *well* for a Catechism means what is suitable for a Catechism; there is no question here of grand forms of oratory. The Homily is pastoral, paternal: "The old Fathers and all who have effected anything," says S. François de Sales, "speak heart to heart, mind to mind, like good fathers speaking to their children."

On the other hand, there are Catechists who, because of their youth, and the natural timidity of their character, speak

almost like children, and with evident nervousness. "*No*," says S. François de Sales, "*you must be courageous. I say this*," he adds, "*on account of those who have a timid manner, as if they were speaking to their fathers rather than to their pupils.*"

S. François de Sales says also, "You must speak affectionately and devoutly, simply and openly, and with confidence; you must be full of the doctrine you are teaching, full of that you are persuading to. The highest art," adds this holy Bishop, "is to have no art; our words must be impassioned, but this not by shouting and exaggerated action, but from inward feeling; they must come from the heart more than from the tongue. We need hardly say it, but heart speaks to heart, the tongue only speaks to ears."

You will not be displeased, gentlemen, even after S. François de Sales, if I quote to you the Abbé Fleury on the same subject:

"If the Catechist," says Fleury, "speaks of the mysteries of religion dryly and coldly, like indifferent things; if any gesture or any word escapes him unbecoming his office, he must not expect any great fruit from his instruction. Children understand the natural language which is common to all men, that which is in the movements of the eyes, the countenance, and the whole body; in the tone and accent of the voice; without any words, this language expresses every passion. For instance, they can easily see if you are in earnest, or in joke; if you are flattering them, or if you are threatening them, if you are calm or in a passion. They take their impressions better from outward things than from words. If therefore you desire to inspire them with the fear or the love of God, you must show that you yourself are penetrated by these sentiments; and to show it, you must really be so. When they see you relating the wonders of God with deep reverence, showing naturally by your manner that you are filled with fear and admiration, they will follow you. It will be the same with hope; if you seem to them to be looking forward to the kingdom of Jesus Christ; if, raising your hands and eyes to Heaven, you are longing for this blessed eternity,

if you tell them in fitting words of the glory of the resurrection body, the joys of Paradise, &c., &c., the children will be touched, impressed. . . ."

These, gentlemen, are very excellent counsels, they seem to leave nothing to be said. Still I must add one which you will perhaps think very commonplace, but it is very necessary. I enjoin upon a Catechist, and the Church enjoins it, as also the Roman pontifical, a clear, distinct, and articulate pronunciation; every consonant to be sounded, every syllable: "*Altâ, distinctâ, et intelligibili voce.*" This pronunciation too must be easy, and varied; not hurried, nor too slow. A monotonous slowness sends the children to sleep, and at any rate does not help in persuading them to anything. A confused and hurried enunciation confuses and wearies them. How can you instruct or persuade people if you do not give them the chance of hearing what you say, nor the time to follow you?

I said, gentlemen, that I should speak to you not only on the Homily, but also on all kinds of preaching to children at the Catechism. You will find this teaching, and the general counsels which apply to all kinds of preaching, in the treatise I have already published. (*La Predication Populaire*, 1^me^ partie. p. 13.) I need not repeat them here.

In our next interview I will speak to you of one kind of preaching which is extremely important in a Catechism, and which would be very important and very useful also in all pastoral pulpits, the ADMONITIONS.

FIFTH DISCOURSE.

THE ADMONITIONS (*Les Avis*).

I HAVE already said, gentlemen, that the three principal parts of the Catechism, namely, the Interrogatory part, the Instruction, and the Homily, are interspersed by singing hymns, by some prayers made all together, and by Admonitions from the Head Catechist.

These Admonitions, if they are well given; these hymns, if well sung; these prayers, if well said, constitute the life and soul of the Catechism.

For this reason, gentlemen, I feel it my duty to dwell particularly on each of these secondary exercises.

And first of all, I will speak to you of the Admonitions. In our last discourse you were perhaps surprised that I ranked the Admonitions among the important parts of preaching.

They are so important, gentlemen, that I do not understand a Catechism without the Admonitions. Therefore to-day I propose to tell you very fully, to make you understand, as far at least as I can, what the Admonitions are; what they treat of; at what times and in what manner they are to be given at the Catechism.

And first of all, what are these Admonitions?

The few words that the Head Catechist says between the different exercises are so called.

There are indeed some occasions when he does not limit himself to saying a few words, but speaks for a longer time.

This is generally before or after prayer; at the beginning

of the Catechism; or after the Instruction; or before the prayer at the end of the Catechism.

These Admonitions often turn on the *Catechism itself* then going on: they give good or bad reports of it; and by this means they keep up the life and activity of it.

They turn on the holy-days which occur in the week, or which are celebrated on the very day; on the faults or the vices of children, and on their virtues; on the points of rule which have not been properly observed; on the most essential practices of the Christian life, which a good Catechist ought to make it his special business to train the children in, such as their morning and evening prayer, the way to confess and to assist at holy Mass. These Admonitions turn also on the duties of children to their parents, to their teachers. It is in these Admonitions that they are spoken to, congratulated on their progress, their steadiness, their industry, on the comfort they give their Catechists; or that they are reproved for their giddiness, their idleness, their absences, &c.; it is then that sick children are commended to their prayers; sometimes they are told a story, or sometimes a parable.

It is then, too, that the Head Catechist gives solemn notice, long beforehand, of all the great festival days of the Catechism, with every attractive or remarkable detail; he gives notice also of any distinguished or welcome visitors, great people, Bishops or others, who propose to come and judge for themselves of all the good things they hear about this Catechism, &c., &c.

His words ought to be very simple, familiar, pleasant, and fatherly; then if need be, they may all at once be very energetic, very animated, very forcible, so as to touch, to hold, to impress, to convert the children. He must above all things avoid affectation, or that melancholy voice so wrongly called the pulpit voice, which really is nothing but an unnatural and conventional voice, used by those who know not the natural voice of truth and zeal.

Exhortation, praise, blame; gentleness, vigour, which sometimes may be almost alarming; simplicity, familiarity, ease, naturalness, the absence of all affectation, of all pretence, and

yet a certain form, a certain dignity of language, diversified now and then by unexpected flashes, by gaiety and a certain graciousness of manner: all these should enter into the tone and character of the Admonitions.

Sometimes even, in certain circumstances, an Admonition may treat of a dogmatic subject; but it should always end with a moral application brought home to the hearts of the children.

In short, the Catechist must quite understand that in these Admonitions it is not only a question of imparting knowledge, of instructing the children; but, above all, it is to educate them, to form their heart and their conscience, to make them love religion and the Catechism, and all their duties, and to bring them to a serious and a Christian life.

This is also the place for proposing to them little cases of conscience, suggested by what one has heard about the children during the week, and in these sometimes making a mistake on purpose, so as to be set right by them.

The Admonitions are of such importance, that the *Méthode de S. Sulpice* does not hesitate to say that the whole success of the Catechism depends on the way they are given; I am quite of the same opinion. The Admonitions, well given, suitably, with the fitting tone and emphasis for each, go further, penetrate souls more deeply than the Instruction and often than the Homily. It is the real education of souls, it is the direction of the family; it is the fatherly voice directing, correcting, forming the mind, the heart, the habits; in two words, which I enjoy repeating, it is the life and soul of the Catechism; it is one of the most powerful means for making it succeed.

I said that these Admonitions should generally be given at the beginning and end of a Catechism; but an intelligent and zealous Catechist will seize any opportunity for giving a useful Admonition, and he will introduce it before or after the Instruction; before or after a hymn; sometimes even when some unexpected circumstance happens during the Catechism. This freedom makes the Catechism much more interesting, and more varied; it is this very thing which makes the

Admonitions the bond, the charm, the salt, so to speak, of all the other exercises. The *Méthode de Saint-Sulpice* rightly remarks that these Admonitions may not only instruct and touch the children, but also supply what may have been wanting in, for instance, a sermon, in a conference, in an Instruction, in a Homily.

All that I have just said will suffice to show you that the Admonitions must be well prepared, and to a certain extent arranged according to a plan drawn out beforehand, which will be in accord with the Instructions, with the Homilies, with the course of the Catechism and the whole Christian year. Good Catechists generally look forward, and make a note in a memorandum book of all the Admonitions they have to give, and for each week, so that nothing essential may be omitted.

If these Admonitions were not seriously prepared the Catechist would only speak vaguely; he would only say trivial things: he would say them without *emphasis* and without *life*, and he would only distract the children, or send them to sleep, instead of interesting them, touching them, making them determined towards good, bringing them up to a Christian life.

I said that these Admonitions should not always be limited to a few words; I will add that even if brief, they need a certain development. In an Admonition, as in every other discourse, there should be one chief and essential point, on which depends all the result you desire to produce; this principal point is the practical conclusion; this it is which the Admonition should have in view, passing quickly over the accessories, and reserving all its strength for the practical, the decisive points. Too often young Catechists do just the contrary; they waste their time and their details upon accessories, brilliant enough perhaps, but of quite secondary importance; and then the practical and important point of the discourse, be it Admonition or Homily, is hardly touched upon.

Frequent and almost always unexpected, coming in each time at the opportune moment, carried straight to those whom they concern, the Admonitions have a power for direction and

correction which nothing can equal; and thus I have no hesitation in saying that to know how to give Admonitions is one of the first and most necessary talents for a Head Catechist.

There are indeed some Admonitions of such gravity that the most grievous results would follow if they failed in their effect; these are extremely difficult to give well, and demand a rare perfection, for it is a question of striking a sure blow, of attaining without fail what one desires to attain, of conquering even by violence such and such a difficulty, such and such a child. I venture to say that it really then becomes like a hand-to-hand fight, like a duel with evil, so direct and personal are these Admonitions, so necessary is it to strike home, sometimes even to pierce deeply!

For my own part, I shall perhaps surprise you by saying so, but it is the simple truth, nothing cost me so much trouble as the Admonitions. I did not prepare with greater care for the most important sermons to be preached in the great pulpits in Paris. Ah! no one knows but those who have made the trial, how delicate a thing it is to make an attack on the innermost soul, to strive against all the resistance of any soul whatsoever!

What skill then it needs, or rather what love (for here all skill is in the heart, all power is from love), what inspiration of heart, what grace from God to speak to all these children; different in age, and therefore in intelligence; and yet to make oneself understood by all, to deal with all, to leave no one outside the teaching; sometimes to move them even to tears, sometimes to excite them even to enthusiasm; to nourish the supernatural flame in their minds, and the sacred fire in their hearts; to lead them up sometimes to the most sublime moral heights; to fill them with zeal for labour and virtue, and for all great and holy things; or perhaps to remove some obstacle which has all at once sprung up, and which hinders their conversion; to supply a remedy for some trouble, some breath of ill-temper, or want of perseverance, or discontent, or error; to calm, to govern, to cheer, to encourage, to brighten, to soften, to kindle.

I must not, gentlemen, finish this advice upon Catechetical preaching without saying that one of the most essential conditions for the Word of God, whether in Admonitions, Instructions, Homilies, or sermons, having its proper fruit, is concentration (*recueillement*) and silence in the audience. It is of the first importance, and you can never insist upon it too strongly. The best conducted Catechism, the most skilful Instructions, the most beautiful Homilies, the most eloquent sermons, the most stirring hymns, even prayer itself, and the Sacraments; all this, without silence and concentration, is almost thrown away.

It is my deep conviction that perfect concentration and a great silence are conditions without which the grace of God scarcely ever enters into souls, "*Non in commotione Dominus.*" It is only in this deep concentration, in this religious silence, that this divine Word triumphs over all resistance; it is when all is silent that God makes His voice to be heard in the inner depths of the soul, it is then that the greatest victories of grace are achieved.

We say, proverbially, a silence in which you may hear a pin drop; it is necessary, and to the letter. But still that is not all, it is not enough; that is only a material silence, and I demand more; there must be a spiritual silence, a religious and attentive silence in the inmost soul.

I must repeat that whoever does not secure the absolute cessation of all noise, of all movement, whether it be in a great cathedral or a small chapel, will never attain to the perfection of that interior silence, without which the grace of God does not descend on hearts.

It is only in this perfect concentration, in this deep silence, that the word of God can be victorious in the great struggles of conscience; only then that every soul in an immense audience can simultaneously be held captive, and seems to be but one soul under the hand of God.

It is then in that profound, mysterious, indescribable silence that souls hear the voice of God close to them, almost without the help of the senses; there is no longer anything between them and Him! I repeat it; it is the moment for great

victories of grace; the moment when souls are so penetrated and carried away that the senses are as if chained and held in suspense. . . . Nothing there but souls . . . and God . . . and His Word! It is the silence of Heaven! "*Factum est silentium per dimidium horæ in mediâ aulâ.*"

For my own part I have always refused to speak to an audience until this silence was secured.

For this reason it is that *a child*, or a Catechist, *coming in late—an opening door*—cannot be permitted.

But I must conclude, gentlemen, only saying that all this not only applies to regular preaching and the principal exercises of the Catechism, but also to the secondary exercises, and in particular to the Admonitions of which I have been speaking.

SIXTH DISCOURSE.

THE HYMNS (*Cantiques*).

One of the things which can best help to give an interest and to put life into Catechisms,—as it is in all Confraternity or other religious meetings,—is the singing of hymns.

The singing of hymns makes children love the Catechism, it rests them, it charms them though still edifying them, while refreshing them it leads them to God, it gives an impulse to everything, and sometimes produces the very deepest impression upon souls.

A hymn well sung often does more for the conversion of children, and even for the greatest sinners, than the most moving exhortations.

I have been always so convinced of this, that if it had been proposed to me to conduct a Catechism without singing hymns, it would have been proposing to me an impossibility; and one year, when I had only seven children to prepare for their first Communion, three boys and four girls, yet nevertheless I made them sing hymns, and they sang them with delight.

But here I must enter into some preliminary details; I must also trace back these things to their highest source.

I shall therefore treat in succession: (1st) on sacred singing in general; (2nd) on the particular advantages of singing hymns at the Catechisms; (3rd) on the Manual of hymns for the Catechism. And first of all, on *Sacred Singing.*

I.

Next to the Divine sacrifice and the Sacraments, two things are all-important in religion and in public worship: the Word of God and sacred music.

The one supports, animates and strengthens the other. By the one, God causes His voice to be heard by the people; by the other, the people lift up their voice to God. And thus we may venture to say that the music of the Church is equal to the Word, and that it is also inspired by God. Who, indeed, has not felt the Divine inspiration in our admirable liturgical chants?

Yes, the singing the praises of God in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, this singing being led, strengthened and improved by the organ, which seems to belong to religion, is one of the most powerful means we possess for influencing souls, and lifting them up to Heaven. If we would save them, it is not enough to speak to them of God, we must make them speak to God, and how? By prayer, by adoration, by thanksgiving, and above all by that worship which consists in singing the praises of God; there, besides the expression of our needs, we have thanksgiving and adoration; there the most lukewarm become fervent, the most fervent are lifted up yet higher; sinners are moved, subdued, they sing out their remorse, the condemnation of their faults, the happiness of repenting of them.

If you do nothing but preach, whether more or less well; if you do not let them sing, their souls will sink into weariness, and soon they will not know what to do or to say in relation to God.

You know how S. Augustine relates his experience: "What emotion I felt, how many tears did I shed when listening to the melodious concert of hymns and sacred songs which echoed in Thy Church! While my ear yielded to the charm of these Divine harmonies, my heart was sweetly flooded with the pure waves of Thy truth, with impetuous ardour it broke out in holy impulses; my tears flowed in torrents, and it was happiness to me to shed them."

This, gentlemen, is one of the secrets of nature, or to speak more rightly, of Providence. Singing is one of the noblest and strongest ways of expressing the feelings of the soul. As S. Augustine again has said, "*Cantat amor!*" Singing is love; thus everything sings in nature, everything sings in

heaven. It is the enthusiasm of the heart. When any kind of feeling within us reaches a certain degree of depth and strength, it naturally gives itself out in song, and then all at once it acquires a wonderful power of communicating itself to others. It moves souls. Whence comes it? What is the secret of this mysterious relation between musical things, cadence, rhythm, harmony, melody, and the deepest powers of our being? I know not. But it is a fact; this is why everything in the soul sings; why all that is noble, ardent, generous, passionate breaks out into song. And sacred song also, and more than all, is enthusiasm; but it is the enthusiasm of all the greatest, the purest, the best feelings of man's heart. Thus, in a Christian congregation, it affects all, it animates, it lifts up, it charms; it excites the weak, the strong, the lukewarm, the fervent, the good, and even the wicked; who has not at some time seen it? Who, for instance, has been able to listen without emotion to the united voices of the crowds under the vaulted roofs of our churches, or to a chant sweetly echoing from the deep and inaccessible retreats of a monastery? But if the singing of the Church is to produce such an effect, it must be really religious singing, as perfect as possible; and above all, it must be popular, that is to say, sung by all the faithful.

I have said to you often, gentlemen, and not without reason, that when the time comes that you have taught your parishioners to sing the Psalms and hymns, then your parishes will be won. From that time, they will love their Church and their Pastor. People who have sung joyfully and with all their heart, love what they have sung, they love the place where they have sung, the pleasant recollection attaches them to it; also they love those with whom they have sung. Would you then have them love God and virtue, and the Church, let them in the church sing the praises of God and virtue.

You have difficulty in bringing them to pray; begin by giving them a taste for hymns; make them sing; for to sing is to pray, it is to pray fervently, sometimes even with transport.

This is true above all with children. The singing of the hymns in well-conducted Catechisms, as also at any time, the singing of Psalms, may sometimes become, on the lips and in the heart of these dear children, the most fervent prayer.

Not only is to sing to pray; but you need only think for a moment, and you will see that even in the singing of hymns there is included the two great means of religious influence of which we spoke a few days ago, *Instruction* and *Exhortation.*

For my own part, I believe without any doubt that the singing of hymns during the Catechism is one of the most powerful means for at the same time instructing the children soundly, touching their heart, lifting up their soul, and converting them. And what I say now of the Catechisms and the children, you know that I would say the same for the parochial services provided for all the faithful.

And, in fact, all the truths of the faith, all the great moral precepts, all the most urgent motives for flying from evil and practising goodness, are to be found on every page in a collection of hymns and sacred songs. And what is also most valuable is, as S. Paul says, that in sacred singing, every one instructs and exhorts himself, without need of any other preacher: "*Docentes et commonentes cosmetipsos psalmis, hymnis et canticis spiritualibus*" (Col. iii. 16). Now is it not a matter of experience that the mind accepts more readily what in this way it says to itself, and that the heart is more strongly though gently impressed? Above all, if the words are helped, as in this case, by that powerful influence which music exerts over the senses, the imagination, and the feelings; that sort of influence which we call a *charm.*

Hymns, then, both instruct and exhort, but they have further this very great advantage, that they oblige the children at the same time to make all sorts of religious *acts*, acts of faith, of hope, of love, of contrition, of good resolve, &c. All these acts, in fact, are to be found in the hymns.

It will be said perhaps by several, that these acts are only on their lips. No, gentlemen, such acts cannot be only on their lips, they cannot be frequently brought into remembrance by sacred singing, without the heart gradually

becoming familiar with them, taking pleasure in them, and at last thoroughly entering into the feelings they express.

Besides, in the Catechism, one is not confined to having the hymns sung; they are explained; they are developed; the beauty of them is shown to the children; they are made to feel their force and unction; and there is no kind of discourse to which they are more alive.

I have had a thousand experiences of this, all more astonishing and delightful one than another. It was by the singing of the hymns that I could do something even with the most hopeless children. If a child with whom we had been able to do nothing, up to the very end of the week-day Catechism, all at once began to sing the hymns, we said: He is saved. And in fact, every day we saw the most delightful changes being worked in him. He became thoughtful, attentive, pious, very soon even penetrated with compunction, and by the end of the Catechism and the Retreat, he showed sometimes a fervour which was most touching.

And even when we were uneasy about an entire Catechism of first Communion, when the great work of converting all these young souls was not being accomplished according to our desires, we redoubled our zeal, not only in instructing and exhorting them, but also in making them sing the hymns well. We all sang with them.[1] The parents who were present at the Catechism often sang with us; we never allowed a single child to be there without his Manual in his hand, and without singing with all his heart; and not a week, not a fortnight passed that we did not discover in them those signs of progress which made us happy again.

Thus I have always believed, gentlemen, and what I see every day in this diocese confirms me in the belief, that every Curé who knows how to organize perfectly—not only in his

[1] It is needless to say that all Catechists ought to sustain and lead the children's singing. A Catechist who does not sing with the children surprises them, does them no good, and with reason, for evidently he is not a man who understands his business. Either zeal or piety is wanting in him, or health. If it is his health, the children ought to be told of it. We never allowed ourselves even to say our Breviary during the singing of the hymns.

Catechisms, but throughout his parish—the sacred music, to be sung not only by the choir but by all the people, will not have to wait long before he sees faith and piety flourishing again, together with a love for the Church and her holy offices. Several of you have already gained this result in the Catechisms of Perseverance and in confraternities, and it is most desirable that you should have the same success in the general congregations of the parish, by letting the faithful sing, whether at High Mass or at Vespers.

But if you desire that this sacred music should become altogether popular in your parishes, the way is to teach it to the children in the Catechisms. Yes, teach them to chant, in Latin, the *Kyrie*, the *Gloria*, the *Credo*, the *Psalms* for Sunday, these which have been consecrated by the usage of the Church, and which are so easy to understand, and some well-known hymns.

The most beautiful sacred hymns have been inspired by the real Presence of our Lord in the Eucharist: the *Ave Verum*, *O Salutaris*, *Tantum ergo*, *Adoro Te*, *supplex*, *Lauda Sion;* if possible, let your children learn these by heart; let them learn also the Litanies of the Blessed Virgin, the *Inviolata*, and even our admirable *Stabat;* and besides all these, some of the hymns in the vernacular from the Manual: thenceforth, the spirit of grace and of prayer will not be slow to descend upon them, and through them on all your parishioners. The parish in Paris, where the congregational singing is best, is Saint-Sulpice, for it is the parish where for so long a time sacred singing has flourished in the Catechisms.

Besides, nothing is more easy than to teach the children to sing all this. I see, in the greater number of parishes, if the Curé only throws a little zeal into it, that not only the children, but the whole congregation, sing gladly and very well, if the choir and the ophicleides allow them.

II.

SINGING hymns has, besides, gentlemen, other advantages, less exalted apparently, but yet greatly valued by those holy and famous Catechists whose example I have set before you.

And first, if well arranged, and alternating with the other parts of the Catechism, the singing prevents weariness in the children, it refreshes them, it rests them after the more serious exercise which has just finished, and it prepares them for that which is about to follow. And with these young natures, nothing is more necessary, in a Catechism which ought to last two hours, and in which so many serious and important things have to be said.

"It must be considered," says Fénélon, "that children's heads are weak, that at their age they are only alive to pleasure; and yet people expect from them an exact propriety and seriousness which they themselves would not be capable of."

The admirable S. François de Sales was quite alive to this, when desiring, by singing hymns, to rejoice the hearts of the children whom he was catechising.

"The hour over, a devout hymn was sung, either to a tune, or simply intoned, or with the organ, the hymn itself being composed by the blessed man, or some other; certainly he did sometimes, as a sort of recreation, give his mind to this sort of poetry; or else he would choose some psalm of David, and give it to the musicians to set to a tune."

Fénélon has remarked that it was by the pleasure of poetry and music that maxims of virtue and polish of manners were introduced among the Hebrews and the Greeks. "Little as one knows of history, we cannot doubt that it was the common practice for many centuries." It is at least certain that, from Apostolic times, it has been the practice of the Church, which has desired, by means of sacred music, to offer to the faithful, and specially to children, an easy way of being instructed in religion, and also to excite earnest and sublime feelings after virtue in their souls.

We read in the *Life of Saint François Xavier* that he composed hymns for his Catechumens, and that he went so far as

to set to music the *Lord's Prayer*, the *Angelic Salutation*, and the *Apostles' Creed*. His historian relates that not only did he by this means banish all the bad songs which the new Christians had sung before their baptism, but that he also supplied this Christian community with a new means of edification. "For the hymns of the holy missionary so pleased men, women, and children, that they sang them day and night, both at home and out in the country." S. Charles Borromeo produced similar effects at Milan, by the hymns which he caused to be sung at his Catechisms. M. Alain de Solminihac, Bishop of Cahors, also put into verse the Ten Commandments and the Apostles' Creed, so that his people might be able to sing them.

Finally, and this last advantage is not unimportant, singing the hymns helps to keep up order and silence, and prevents the distraction of the children, at certain moments when it is almost inevitable. For instance, those who are accustomed to Catechisms know that when an exercise comes to an end, the children make a confused noise, such as one hears in churches after the first point of a sermon; they take their books, they hastily open their hymn-books, sometimes they will ask their neighbours a question, or even the Catechists; as if, wearied with the attention they have been giving, they are trying now to make up for it. The same sort of thing happens when they are going away after the Catechism; one form after another gets up all together, they defile into the aisles while other children are leaving their places to follow them, and others again to follow on. Well, if the precaution has been taken to make the children sing at that time, the sound of the music will cover the noise; they will not be aware of the noise which their movement must cause, and by this pious device you accustom them to feel that calmness and quiet are never absent from the Catechisms.

I borrow these practical observations, which are of real importance, from the excellent *Méthode de S. Sulpice*.

But, I ought to add, if the singing of hymns is to be really profitable, the Head Catechist ought to give it his greatest attention, he ought frequently to remind the children that

their hymns are prayers, and he should explain them in such a manner that the children will understand the sense and enjoy the words. One very necessary point is that they should never be allowed to scream in singing, the youngest are certain to do it. It must be stopped at once. It should be immediately and very severely rebuked and warned against. Neither must there be any hurry in the singing, though at the same time it must not be allowed to drag—slowness is sometimes unbearable to children. It is easier, particularly for boys, to sing a little fast than too slowly.

The Head Catechist should be constantly occupied in making those sing who are not singing, in moderating the voices, in directing the whole; and for this purpose, his great duty is to arrange, prepare, and study the hymns well which he means to be sung at the Catechism, and to have the list, of which he gives a duplicate to the organist, quite ready. Without this precaution, the chances are that the same hymns will be always sung, perhaps two or three which do not suit either the circumstances,[1] or the festivals which are being celebrated, or the needs of the children. The Manual of which I have already spoken to you is a great help, gentlemen, in this respect, not only for the children, but also for the Catechists. In conclusion, I will say a few words concerning this book.

III.

THE *Manual for Catechisms* has been composed chiefly with the view of helping such of the parochial Clergy as have the charge of the important ministry of Catechising. It sets forth to the Catechists and to the children the whole thing, the order and course of all that is done in the Catechisms of first Communion and of Perseverance, and serves as a guide to their piety through the whole course of the year; it is like a *Paroissien*, like a book of offices, where every meeting, every festival, every solemn time is presented in succession with

[1] I have seen deplorable examples of this; I have known a hymn on the *Last Judgment* sung at the beginning of Mass, and the hymn which should precede the Communion, "*Mon bien-aimé ne paraît pas encore*," sung as the hymn for an act of thanksgiving.

everything which belongs to it, and which helps to teach the spirit of it, and grasp its special object, as *Billets*, *Admonitions*, *Hymns*, *Prayers*, &c.

It is easy to see how useful all this order is, and what interest it gives to the different parts of the Catechism. How different, for instance, it is on the day of first Communion, when you are desiring to stir up the piety of the children, and make them feel the beauty of the services, if they have to look out in a collection, in the midst of a thousand different things, for here a prayer, there a hymn, for the acts of thanksgiving, &c., in another place; or on the other hand, everything which goes to make up this great and touching function is given to them in order and completeness!

I need not say, gentlemen, that in well-arranged Manuals the first Communion, Confirmation, and the week-day Catechism which prepares for them, have always been the object of very special care, and they form the most interesting part of the Manual. The first Communion is there treated as a great event, the approaches to it being gradually unfolded. The children are followed step by step, from the first meeting of the week-day Catechism, from their consecration to the Blessed Virgin, up to the important day on which, after most serious self-examination, they make their general confession. Then begins the immediate preparation for the first Communion. And then come the solemn meetings in Retreat, up to the great and happy days of Absolution, of first Communion, and of Confirmation. Finally, all this is crowned by the Renewal of Baptismal vows in the first Communion, by the festival devoted to perseverance, and by the gathering for farewell; and all so well combined that one feels the powerful influence of that Divine Spirit, Who, in the Church, has inspired the men of God, to whom we owe all the present beautiful organization of our Catechisms.

In the Manual upon which I was engaged, and which I can venture to recommend to you, because of the extreme care which was bestowed on it, I was afraid at first that we had given too many prayers for this particular time; but we could only congratulate ourselves when we saw how eagerly the

children seized on them as food for their devotion, and what fervour they kindled in them; never had our first Communions been so happy, above all never had the Confirmations been so edifying and so devout.

We also inserted, at the end of the morning prayer, a method for meditation, simple, short, and within the children's grasp. At the end of the work also there are a considerable number of meditations composed solely for them, and we have had the opportunity of seeing how easily children of all classes understand and practise this form of devotion, which is the foundation of all Christian living and the most certain guarantee for perseverance.

We hope also that we have made a happy choice of festivals for the Catechism, and that they may be suitable in all parishes. For the first festival in the little Catechisms for boys and girls, we have those of *S. Joseph* and *the Childhood of the Blessed Virgin*, and for the more solemn festival, *the Love of Jesus for children;* as the first festival of the Catechisms of Perseverance, we have that of *S. Louis of Gonzaga* for the boys, and *the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin* for the girls; and for the more solemn festival, *the Holy Childhood of Jesus.*

The repetition and explanation of *Billets* is undoubtedly one of the most interesting features of our meetings. It pleases the children wonderfully; instruction is conveyed in the most pleasant manner, sometimes even so playfully as to excite a smile, and it reaches their hearts with all the greater ease. At one time this exercise was very rare, and often lost a great deal of its interest, because the children, whose place it was to repeat, could hardly be heard. We have brought it back into more frequent use, and upwards of a hundred *Billets*, written for all the important festivals of the year, supply the children with a consecutive course of useful instructions; and since, by the help of the Manual, they have been able to follow the recitations, we have observed the quite new interest which they take in them. We have also added for each festival an act of consecration, suggested by the festival itself, and likely to lead the children on to form generous resolutions.

As to the hymns, we have bestowed great pains on them; the greater part have been corrected, and moreover:

1. We have distributed them according to the festivals, the periods or times to which they belong; and thus, joined with the *Billets*, the Admonitions, prayers, &c., they form so many complete offices.

2. We have placed a title at the head of each hymn, which marks and explains its subject sufficiently to draw the attention of the children to it beforehand, and thus prepares them to enter into the spirit and feeling of the hymn.

I have now given you the contents of this book, which is called the *Manual for Catechisms.*

IV.

I WILL only now add two very important practical observations, and with these I shall conclude:

1. If you wish the children to sing, and to sing well, I cannot too often repeat, *you must sing with them;* every Catechist must also have his Manual, and use it. I have known children who for half an hour have not sung a verse, all at once begin to sing delightfully; simply because their Catechist had turned to them, looked at them, and said, "Sing, my children"; then singing himself, they were incited to sing too.

2. You must also know how to *give out the hymns* well, always saying the page as well as the hymn, so that the children may never be uncertain, nor the singing feeble. These simple words, well pronounced, with an audible voice, are enough: "*Hymn* p. 273, '*Mon bien-aimé ne paraît pas encore,*'" or perhaps, "*We are going to sing the* '*Laudate, pueri,*' p. 29." Having said this, then *immediately* begin to sing with vigour and boldness.

But for all this, I repeat, the Priests who support the singing, and above all the one who leads it, must stand, *conversâ facie ad pueros,* facing them, like the leader of an orchestra, who does not stand behind his musicians, or at the side, but at their head and facing them.

3. *Hymns à refrain* have an excellent effect, and are

generally very popular. The alternating of voices sung by the choir, with the refrain sung by the whole body, is sometimes exceedingly good.

The effect is not the same if the voices are alternated by the organ. The interruption of the voices by the organ playing alone, nearly always stops all ardour or enthusiasm. The choir, with the refrain, on the contrary, keeps it alive.

I have never had a single experience favourably to the use of the organ in this way. I have, on the contrary, always found that the organ played between the couplets or verses had an undoubtedly bad effect. It stops all enthusiasm.

4. It must be an understood thing, the organ is only really of use for accompanying the singing, and strengthening the voices, unless it may be during the coming in or going out, or possibly that the voices may rest on occasion of any great fatigue. An organ playing alone and alternating with the voices is a thing never known but amongst ourselves. Besides, who has not heard complaints against these organs, on which are sometimes played such unsuitable tunes? What is wanted is, that the organ shall accompany all the verses to strengthen the voices, and that the children and the congregation shall sing everything themselves from one end to the other, without any interruption from the organ breaking in alone.

In this discourse, gentlemen, I have entered into many practical details; but I do not think any man of experience can regret it. Theory is necessary, and first of all I set myself to show you the theory of the Catechisms, in all its truth and all its beauty; but the more beautiful the theory, the more is it necessary, if it is to be realized, that we should be thoroughly instructed in practical details; for in this case the details alone contain a real teaching, they have an undoubted use of their own.

In our next discourse, gentlemen, we shall treat on a subject which is again of very chief importance for the great work of the Catechism, and for the Christian education of the children: we shall speak of *Prayers at the Catechism.*

SEVENTH DISCOURSE.

PRAYER AT THE CATECHISM.

What has been said so far, gentlemen, is no doubt very important, but yet less so than what remains for me to explain, for all that has gone before is, so to speak, only preparatory work leading up to that which forms the subject of the present discourse, to that so essential work in the Christian life—Prayer.

Certainly, gentlemen, the hymns are prayers, and sometimes admirable ones; but they are not enough; and at the Catechism, besides the hymns, we must have Prayer, properly so called.

One of the great results of well-conducted Catechisms is to teach the children to pray, and the best help towards that is to make them pray together, to have prayer in common.

I.

I shall surprise none of you by saying, gentlemen, that one of the most important parts of that religious education which we owe to children, is to teach them to say their ordinary prayers well, to say them properly morning and evening, to attend religiously at holy Mass on Sunday, to say rightly the Acts of Confession, &c., in short, to say all these prayers, and practise all these Christian duties with attention, piety, and great reverence, both inward and outward.

If you succeed in teaching them to pray, if they have learnt to pray, if they really pray, then they may no doubt grow

careless, they may even have falls; but they will never wholly go away from God, nor from the Church, nor from you. If they pray, they will not forget the holy truths of religion, which are constantly called to mind in the prayers; neither will they altogether lose the impression of divine things, they will always keep a certain consciousness of God, because this consciousness and this impression are kept up and renewed in them by the repetition of their daily prayers. If they pray, though it may be very imperfectly, and without much fervour, still they will always draw down on themselves some favour from God, they will receive some benefits from Him. If they pray, they will persevere, sooner or later at least they will return to the Lord, and will be saved.

Therefore I repeat, gentlemen, that one of the greatest spiritual services you can and ought to render to the children confided to your care, is to teach them to pray, and to pray well.

We know that, in general, children either do not pray at all, or they pray badly; even if they repeat prayers, the carelessness and thoughtlessness which is so natural at their age generally prevents them from attaching any meaning to the words. The Catechism is above all the place where they should be taught to pray, and to pray well.

To succeed in this, to give them the holy and happy habit of true prayer, the Catechists must make them pray under their guidance. But how ought this to be done? Evidently we must not confine ourselves to making them repeat, more or less mechanically, as is often the case, *Our Father*, and *Hail, Mary!* or other prayers at the beginning and end of the Catechism. These beautiful prayers must be explained to them, the meaning of every word, they must be made themselves to explain them; then they must be exhorted to say them again, not only gravely and religiously, with a clear and audible voice, but with all the recollection, all the reverence, both inward and outward, of which they are capable.

Let this be well understood, gentlemen: till you have seen your children pray at the Catechism, pray really, till the Spirit of prayer has descended on them, taken possession of

them, penetrated them in such a way that, as if by inspiration, they say a prayer which is not only in their book and on their lips, but in their heart,—you have done nothing yet. It is when they pray, and then only, that the work of God begins to develop in their soul.

II.

I NEED not remind you, gentlemen, that all, even the most ignorant, ought to know by heart, and perfectly, the *Lord's Prayer*, the *Angelic Salutation*, the *Apostles' Creed*, the *Commandments of God*, and *those of the Church*. I may add that it is very desirable that they should also know the other portions of the morning and evening prayers which are contained in the Catechism.

They should also know by heart the *Acts* of Faith, of Hope, of Love, and of Contrition, because there is an obligation on every Christian to make these Acts from time to time; they should be said at this Catechism, sometimes by one child, sometimes by another, on their knees, at the foot of the Altar, and a reward should be given to the one who knows and repeats them perfectly. I will quote to you M. de la Chétardie on the importance and advantage of this practice:

"The youngest children are quite capable of it. Besides that every Christian is bound in conscience often to make these acts, the children are full of them all the week, that they may be able to say them well the following Sunday. Their parents take pleasure in making them repeat them at home, their family is edified by them, they come to the Church to hear them recited, and that encourages them much."

Some one will say, perhaps, that for these acts there is no absolute need of prescribed formulas, nor of a particular set of words. Leave all that, gentlemen, to be said by theorists. For you, who are above all practical men, do you maintain that forms are not only useful for all, but that they are even necessary to most men, who are generally too little instructed to be able to supply words for themselves. Be very

anxious, therefore, that there shall not be a single child in your Catechism who does not know by heart the words of all these Christian *Acts*.

Among all the prayers which are said together at the Catechism, those which occur in the *bénédiction* of the Blessed Sacrament present on the Altar, and the prayers at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, ought to hold the first rank. The holy Mass, the *Saluts* of the Blessed Sacrament, are grand and favourable opportunities for teaching the children to pray to God, to adore Him, to bless and praise Him.

Mgr. Borderies, Bishop of Versailles, the most excellent Catechist perhaps that has ever lived, during the course of the week-day Catechism gave the children who were preparing for their first Communion the opportunity of hearing Mass every day on which they met. It was there chiefly that he taught them to pray, and I have heard him say that if it had been necessary he would without hesitation have sacrificed all other parts of the Catechism for this one; because, in fact, the holy Mass is nothing less than the whole sum of religion, and every one who assists rightly at holy Mass, who understands it, who knows how to pray there, is already a good Christian, or will soon become one.

In order to teach the children well the way of assisting at holy Mass, to make them read rightly the prayers at the holy Sacrifice, and thus to follow every action of the Priest, it is absolutely necessary that all those who can read shall have a book of prayers, and know how to use them; some idea of the different parts of the holy Sacrifice must have been given them, and they must have been taught to read the prayers belonging to the different parts, in their proper places in their books.

The Head Catechist should, *every time*, remind them of the necessity, the sacred duty of hearing the holy Mass every Sunday, and the way to join in it rightly. An excellent way of exciting the children's attention is to exhort them to ask of our Lord present on the Altar, some *special* grace for themselves. Moreover, the Catechist should always have such hymns sung as relate to the *Holy Mysteries*, and, at least from

time to time, should have those prayers of the Mass said aloud, which are said while there is no singing.[1]

They should also be shown, in the same book, the acts and prayers before and after Confession, before and after Communion, and they should be trained to the habit of never confessing or communicating without having read these *Acts* with attention, and trying always to produce those feelings in their heart which are there expressed.

It would be excellent also to bring them to use the sign of the Cross on getting up and going to bed; to say their prayers at home before a *Crucifix* or an *image of the Blessed Virgin*, &c. . . .

Oh! how important, gentlemen, all this is! And how those among you who have the true pastoral feeling and practical minds will understand it!

Be very certain that nothing which you put *only into the mind* of your children, and I would say the same of grown-up persons, will remain there, unless you lay a foundation of *Christian practices* in their life, a foundation which shall sustain everything. And do not consider that you have really gained anything considerable, nor above all what will be durable, unless what you have introduced through the children becomes a part of the morals of the parish itself.

For is it not this, is it not this foundation of Christian life, of Christian customs, practices and habits, which has preserved faith and religion in our country parts so long. It was when that failed in our dioceses that Religion itself departed; and, believe me, it is in this way that we must try to re-establish it, unless we wish to labour in vain.

Theory, for children above all, goes for nothing, practice is everything. With practice, instruction will be remembered, because it is connected with something; without it, it will be as flowing water.

[1] It is almost needless to add, that with the object of inspiring the children with religion, the Catechists must not give only an inward attention to this holy Sacrifice; they must also show it outwardly; falling on their knees at the Consecration and Communion, striking the breast at the *Confiteor* and the *Agnus Dei*. All thoughtful men will understand the importance of these recommendations.

And therefore I have no scruple in thinking and saying, that a poor little Sister of Charity, who only knows how to teach children the simple letter of the Catechism, with the most common explanations; but who makes them learn all the prayers which a Christian requires, and say them quite correctly and reverently every day; who trains them to listen to holy Mass rightly, to prepare themselves well for the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist, using the *Acts* in their books; who instructs them how to give their heart to God in the morning, to offer Him their actions throughout the day, and the rest of the holy Christian practices,—this humble Sister would do more good, and would advance the work of spiritual regeneration in a parish more than the most skilful teacher, with the most learned and the best studied instructions, if he neglected this very simple, but quite practical part of religious education.

Finally, all these prayers, gentlemen, all these acts, all these pious exercises, and the way to say them attentively and reverently, you ought to teach all your children very early, from their youngest years; in the little Catechisms, and above all in the Catechisms preparatory to the first Communion.

III.

And for the practice of all this, I will show you what seems to me could be easily done, and with good result.

1. When the Catechisms begin, give notice that you will question the children on the prayers and the acts, and warn them to be ready to answer. You will also be careful to tell them on which of the prayers and acts you propose to question them.

2. "As to the elder ones," you will add, "I shall, of course, not question them; but if they have forgotten any one of the prayers or acts I have just mentioned, I earnestly request them not to neglect going over them again, and learning them as soon as possible." And at the same time you will tell them how best they may do this: for instance, to read them every

day from a book, when they say their prayers morning and evening; or again, to let others who know them say them aloud, they following mentally, or even joining in, saying them till they know them themselves by heart.

3. At every meeting of the Catechism, above all at the little Catechisms, tell the children to repeat some part of the prayers and acts, and add short explanations that they may quite understand the meaning.

4. Do not fail to give at least one instruction on Prayer, the obligation of it, its advantages, its character, and the necessary dispositions, both inward and outward, for praying well; and again another instruction on the acts of the theological virtues, and on the act of contrition.

5. Besides the prayers that you will thus hear them repeat, as an exercise of memory, to be sure that they know them well, there should be besides, at the beginning and end of every meeting, prayers said by the child, for the express purpose of teaching them how to pray well.

Independently of their direct use, these prayers, gentlemen, will have the advantage of serving as models, showing practically the way to pray. But for this, they must be always perfectly said, in every way. All will be on their knees. You will enjoin on the children to keep themselves in a becoming posture; the body upright; never leaning on the forms; their arms crossed, their eyes on the ground, or towards the altar. You will recite that part of the prayers which are to be said by you, without hurry, with a clear and distinct voice, but yet deeply reverent; for you have to set them the example. You will teach them to respond to the prayers in the same manner, gently, with moderate and controlled voices, not letting some hurry on, while the others drag. This will oblige you to put little pauses between the sentences.

It requires, I own, a little patience at the beginning, to accustom the children to pray thus; but when once the habit is formed, the thing will go of itself, without difficulty.

To succeed in this better, it would perhaps be well to employ some children who may have strong and trained voices to take the lead, and thus direct the others; all then would take

example by them, and their own little *amour-propre* would be interested in everything going perfectly.

You are perhaps surprised, gentlemen, that I should enter into so many details; but let me say again, it is a practical man who is speaking to you; I have exercised the sacred ministry for many long years, with the poor and with the rich, with the children and with their elders in the faith; and I can declare to you that all these details are absolutely necessary, though too often neglected, and that they have a very real importance for the salvation of souls.

And would to God, gentlemen, that not only in the Catechisms, but in every congregation of the faithful, the Curés would set themselves with great care to regulate, by all the means I have spoken of, or by others, that very important part of public worship, *Prayers said in common!* Alas! it is very necessary that this should be done everywhere!

In many parishes, not only do the people respond badly in the prayers, hurriedly, and confusedly, and murmuring the words rather than articulating them; but, even that part which is said by the Priest, is it always recited as it ought to be? Is it clear, distinct, the spirit of faith breathing in it? Is it done in such a way that the people can hear well what the Priest says? How deeply is it to be regretted if it is the Priest himself who sets the example of unbecoming haste!

These are abuses, gentlemen, which must be reformed, because of the reverence due to Divine Majesty, and also because of the edification of the congregation, for which we are responsible.

It is evident that prayers badly said are lost on the Christian congregation; while, if well recited, well pronounced, well heard by all, they would be full of comfort and fruit to every one.

Not only then would the children and the congregation pray, but they would be teaching themselves by the holy truths of which the prayers are full; they would be touched by the devout feelings expressed in them; their heart would

follow their ears and tongue; they would enter, if I may so say, into the spirit of prayer, and prayer itself would take possession of them.

I am not afraid of going too far when I say that public prayers, said in this way, would be a real preaching; and that too of the most useful kind, because they would speak to every faculty of the soul at once, and above all, they would speak to the heart.

However, that may be, I finish with the same words that I said just now: till you have brought your children to pray as they should, you have done nothing. And you have everything to hope for, a return to God, a sincere and thorough conversion, a good first Communion, happiness, and the eternal salvation of a child whom you have taught and led to pray.

EIGHTH DISCOURSE.

THE "CONDIMENT" OF THE CATECHISM.

THE *Condiment* of the Catechism! It is a singular expression, gentlemen. Dictionaries define *Condiment*, that which seasons food, which gives it a flavour. The best food needs it; without it, it is tasteless and insipid. Well, the Catechism is an excellent thing, but it needs its Condiment, and this is what I mean to talk to you about to-day.

In all our former discourses, gentlemen, you have seen what constitutes the fundamental portion of every Catechism. Three principal parts: (1) the repetition and explanation of its letter; (2) the instruction; (3) the recitation of the Gospel and the Homily. And three secondary, but also very important parts: (1) the *Counsels* from the Head Catechist; (2) the Hymns; (3) the Prayers.

Such is the course and order of a Catechism; but that is not enough. In order that the real end may be fully attained, that the work on souls may be more certain, there needs something more, something to relieve, and if I may venture to say so, to season all this, something which shall give to all these excellent exercises of the Catechism a sort of taste, an aroma which shall make them loved and enjoyed. There needs as it were a breath of life circulating in all these different parts, an indefinable secret fire penetrating and animating them.

Suaviter ac fortiter, I repeat, should be the motto for a Catechism: everything there must be done with gentleness and strength combined; the heart must find food there, it must find that sweet and powerful attraction which is in

everything that is done with love and pleasure; but also an energetic will must rule there, firm, exact, severe if needful, keeping everything in order.

In short, there must be an unction, a flavour, a *Condiment* which shall make the Catechism very enjoyable; and to ensure its success, there must also be the vigour and nerve of Discipline.

Joy, and everything which brings joy to the heart, the fêtes, emulation, rewards, encouragements of every kind, all this is the *Condiment* of the Catechism; the *Discipline* is everything that maintains good order, regularity, the punctual performance of every part, such as the placing of the children in their seats; the exact attention, the silence; it includes also fatherly warnings, severe reproofs, even sending away, &c.

I will speak to you first of all, gentlemen, of what I call the *Condiment* of the Catechism.

I.

THE nature of children imperatively demands it. They are at a very susceptible age, particularly for any pleasant impressions, or for feelings of affection, and therefore to a skilful Catechist arises the necessity,—but it is besides an immense resource for him,—of getting hold of his children through their imagination and their heart, as well as by reason and faith. At this age they love, and therefore to be useful, things must be presented to them on their lovable side, and above all, religion, which with all its holy austerity, has so much that is lovable and charming.

And I must add that the ways of touching the heart and imagination of children, are, thanks to their bright and overflowing nature, so easy. It takes very little to make a child happy, or to make him shed tears; to please and win him, or to displease him, and make him dislike you!

It is the duty, and it is the art of a Catechist, to be always on the watch against the faults of children, otherwise he will sometimes meet with terrible hindrances; but also, to get a

hold on them, he must know how to profit by all their good tendencies. And what one can do then, when one has touched the sensitive chords of their nature, when one has opened up the spring of feeling in their soul, when one has brought all their faculties into play, and even their faults, everything which moves them, then what one can do with them is wonderful.

To neglect all these means, all these resources, not to know how to shed any charm on a Catechism, when both the nature of children and the things which concern religion so wonderfully lend themselves to it; always to present it as an austere thing, always to have only a dry and hard manner, to make the Catechism a *triste*, wearisome thing, without any attraction or life, this is not only a great mistake and a great want of skill; it is also to put in immense peril the future of these little children, for, do not forget, gentlemen, it is at the Catechism that children receive their first impressions of religion, impressions which can never be effaced, and if these impressions are of weariness and dislike, when, I ask you when will religion appear to them as lovable? All their life they will feel a secret and perhaps insurmountable aversion to it, and not only will their soul not be educated at the Catechism, but by a sort of treason, arising from the incapacity, the hardness or the neglect of the Catechists, it will be educated in a quite contrary sense to the real evangelical education, and quite opposite results will be produced.

All friends of childhood have not failed to see this danger, and to point it out. The most illustrious of them, Fénélon, says:

"If children form a sad and gloomy idea of religion, everything is lost, you labour in vain . . . . it is the fault of education generally; pleasure is to be found on the one side, everything that is unpleasant and wearisome on the other; all the wearisome things are on the side of study, and all pleasure is in mere diversions. What can a child do, but bear this order very impatiently, and run the more ardently after his games?"

Fleury also says:

"After such teaching, all discourses on religion seem melancholy and wearisome. If they listen to sermons, if they read books of devotion, it

is with dislike and against the grain, as we may take medicines which are good for us, but disagreeable. Religion seems to them a hard law ; they only keep to it from fear, without any enjoyment, without affection, looking upon it as what it is not, and only keeping to its formalities. Others, who are more unruly, wander away from it altogether ; prejudiced by the false ideas which the hardness of the Catechisms has given them, and also by the simpleness of the women who were the first to speak to them about religion, they will listen to nothing, and without trying to enlighten themselves, they take for granted that all discourse upon religion is not even worth attending to. This is what makes infidels . . . . this is what the bad effects of disagreeable instructions may come to."

In order to avoid these melancholy results, Fénélon would desire that at the Catechism every means should be used for showing religion to the children as something *beautiful, lovable,* and *imposing ;* instead, he adds, of the way in which it is commonly represented, as something *sad* and *without life.*

He would have no pains spared in awaking the curiosity of the children, in exciting their zeal, in keeping up their emulation, in making them happy at the Catechism. Not only does he advise giving *prizes* and *rewards* to the children, but this great man is not above going into details, and specifying *gilt-edged books, pictures, carvings,* and *medals.*

It has been by such means that the most celebrated Catechists, those whose names I have already mentioned in these discourses, gentlemen, have raised the Ministry of Catechising to such a height, and have done such great things in the Church.

These means are apparently very simple, but in truth, that is the way in which all great things are done. It is by using language full of interest, of grace, of knowledge, of strength and unction ; and adding to this, *encouragements, rewards, prizes* and *fêtes,* all that I call the *Condiment* of the Catechism, all that makes it animated, joyful and happy, it is in this way that the Catechism will be a success.

It is moreover precisely the mind of the Church ; it is what Councils have often recommended ; it is a formal order of a Council of Besançon of the year 1571 :

"Let the Catechists be careful not to frighten the children by too much austerity and severity ; let them, on the contrary, understand and satisfy

all the needs and all the wants of these young natures, so that they may fill them, drop by drop, with the doctrine of salvation; let them learn to give such attraction and charm to their religious teaching, that the children (as S. Jerome expressly demands) should go to it willingly, and not by constraint, with pleasure, not from necessity."[1]

Therefore, gentlemen, let the Catechism have its charm, its fêtes and its rewards, since nothing pleases children so much as rewards and fêtes: "*Alliciantur pueri præmio et apparatu,*" says again the Council of Antwerp.

It is easy to see how important fêtes are to the young, how attractive they are to the children, and what a resource for the Catechists. I have already pointed out this.

In truth, nothing can be more charming, more pleasing, more pure, than these fêtes of the Catechism; nothing equals the pleasure they give to the children, nor the lasting impression they leave on their mind.

The exact uniformity of the exercises is broken, and curiosity is vividly excited by the novelty; at the same time little favours are granted which are highly prized by the children; they are excused from part of their accustomed task, they have nothing to repeat, there is not the ordinary Instruction; the fête will make good compensation for these omissions, but meanwhile the children are happy; all faces and all hearts are joyful; into these happy souls the holy words penetrate more deeply, and produce their greatest effect; it is then above all that the Catechist can, so to speak, form and fashion these young hearts at his will.

There must then be fêtes in a Catechism, and the series must be skilfully arranged; besides the fêtes common to all Catechisms, such as the opening fête, All Saints, Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, the distribution of prizes, there must be special fêtes belonging to the particular Catechism. The

[1] *Concil. Bisunt.*, anno 1571. Conciliorum Germanic., t. VIII. p. 190. "Cavebit diligenter pastor, ne severitate, minis, vel difficultate doctrinæ pueros deterreat ab ea schola: sed cum mansuetudine et honesta gravitate curabit ea doctrinæ christianæ rudimenta in animos suorum adolescentium *paulatim* et simpliciter *instillare:* habita ratione capacitatis et ingenii ipsorum."

S. Jerome says, in speaking of the education of a child: "Amet quod cogitur discere, ut non opus sit, sed delectatio; non necessitas sed voluntas."—*Ad Gaudentium de Pacatulæ infantulæ educatione.*

scheme ought to be so arranged that there shall be enough of them, but not too many; they must not hinder the fixed course of instruction, but only give a little rest from them.

At each of these fêtes the children should be prepared beforehand to celebrate it; it should be given out with some mystery, thus arousing and stimulating their curiosity and their longing; one may sometimes contrive to let them understand more about it than one actually tells them.

When the day arrives, the chapel will have been decorated with great care, in accordance with the fête. What a joy to the children as they come in to see all the preparations! The sanctuary all adorned; hangings, chandeliers, and branches; over the altar a profusion of candles and flowers. Their eyes are surprised and charmed at the sight; then let an opening hymn, well chosen, begin the fête, and let the effect of the outward magnificence be added to by a little music suited to the time, and well performed; they will be quite charmed, and their soul will be open to receive the preaching of the holy Word.

The preaching on these festival days should be bright, animating, and touching; quite suitable to the time, and full of reality; there should even be something surprising and unexpected in the form, if not in the groundwork.

Either the festival of the day may be preached upon, or some virtue or truth closely connected with the festival; always very decidedly and plainly, and with personal, but pleasant, encouraging, and comforting applications.

There are no formal divisions, neither is there the *Ave Maria.*

There is a text; it is a curious thing that children are extremely alive to the good choice of a text.

I have known these little sermons, when well made, rise to the highest and most brilliant eloquence by the very truth of the feelings and thoughts expressed; I have known them to inspire the children with a real enthusiasm.

For young priests, it is a true introduction to the grander kind of preaching. For, you understand, the heart is there; it is the heart which speaks, and of the heart it has been said: "*Pectus est, quod disertum facit.*"

I am speaking now of a Catechism of Perseverance, and therefore I have spoken of Communions. In fact, it is essential that, if possible, there should be on these festivals two meetings, one in the morning, the other in the evening; in the morning the COMMUNION, and in the evening all the great functions in connection with the "SALUT." We have already had occasion to describe the special characters of these two services; that of the morning is truly heavenly, that in the evening may be made delightful to the children, it finishes the day in the midst of most brilliant and touching ceremonies.

What I have said here of Communions on the festival days, and all that has gone before, will sufficiently show you, gentlemen, that in asking you to do everything to make the Catechism pleasant to the children, it is with the great thought of making them supremely profitable; and with this object you will see that the monthly Communions are a wonderful aid.

A Catechism of Perseverance is only really edifying and prosperous when its *monthly Communions* are numerous and fervent. In fact, any one who has been present but once, gentlemen, would see that it is there chiefly that the souls of the children are formed and educated, it is there that their piety becomes tender, sound, deep, and generous. The peace, the joy which they then taste, and which is to them really a foretaste of heaven, takes them off without any effort from the vain and noisy joys of the world; they prefer religion to anything, and more and more they love the Catechism, where piety has made them *so happy*.

The Communions of the Catechism are called monthly Communions, even when they do not take place more than seven or eight times a year. It is well to preserve the name, first because it stirs up devout children to make their Communion individually even on certain days when there is no Communion at the Catechism, and also because it teaches every one that *Communion every month* is, in our day, the great means by which we may persevere and be strengthened in all Christian virtues.

The few words said in the morning, before and after the Communion, and in the evening, before the act of self-consecration, require extreme care. What is said should be very short, because a long service has preceded it, but it should be excellent. There must be nothing common; what at another time would be simple and good, would then be cold, dull and wearisome. It should be a pouring out from the heart, like a ray of light. It should be, as St. John the Evangelist says, "*Unctio docet de omnibus.*"

Lastly, for these fête-days we reserve some good stories, or some of the uncommon exercises, invented by great Catechists, and recommended by Fénélon himself; such as *billets*, conferences and dialogues.

III.

Stories! You know, gentlemen, how the word acts like magic on children: there is nothing they are more eager for —nothing gives them so much pleasure. They tremble with excitement, directly they are promised one; they wait for it impatiently, they listen to it with the utmost greediness. Although some Catechists may be afraid of too often introducing stories into the ordinary instructions, where, indeed, they should be only used with discretion, yet this scruple has no place for the rare occasion of a fête-day. When we give the children this pleasure, we never fail to win them. Only it is necessary to tell the story well, to choose the story which is to be related well, and for these great days, to have in reserve some narrative of great interest, one of those beautiful holy stories which Fénélon was so anxious that the children should be given a taste for, *not by telling them they are more beautiful than others, which perhaps they would not believe, but by making them feel it to be so*, which is much more difficult, and requires more care and zeal.

It is therefore very useful to have, and all good Catechists have it, a good collection of stories, from which to draw, and which will be constantly enriched by new ones, when there is opportunity.

The *Billets.*—The repetition of the *Billets*, says with great truth the *Méthode de S. Sulpice*, adds also much to the solemnity of a festival; it teaches the spirit of it in a way which is instructive, pious, and at the same time pleasant. The *billets*, as I have already said, gentlemen, were the admirable invention of a great Catechist, Père Romillon. It was a charming idea which inspired him. To give a new attraction to the teaching, he wished to give it to the children by means of the children themselves; for it is a matter of experience that they are always then more ready to listen; or better still, he desired to give it to them by angels from heaven; therefore he had the little children whom he had chosen for this purpose, dressed like angels, with little white wings; he stationed them on a raised place, and in full Catechism asked them questions to which they gave the answers which the Father had given them, written on the *billets.* At the present time, the wings have disappeared, but the angels and the *billets* have been preserved; and it is always one of the most interesting parts of the Catechism. These *billets* then, are certain questions; there should not be *more than six*, and that is too much, *four* should be enough, which gather up the lessons of a festival; the answers develop it. The Catechist puts the questions to the children; they answer by saying their *billet.* It need hardly be said that these *billets* must be compiled with the greatest care, in a clear, distinct, and exact style, and that they may be more easily remembered, they must NOT BE LONG.

The children are taught to look on it as a great honour to be chosen to repeat the *billets*, and a reward is always attached to it; therefore, those who are to recite must be chosen with care; those who are the most advanced and the best-behaved, must be chosen; and, moreover, those who pronounce well and know how to make themselves heard. It is important that they be thoroughly practised, and that they repeat without the slightest hesitation.[1] The explanation of the

[1] We find the following advice in the *Méthode de S. Sulpice*, it will be useful to follow it:

"On the Sunday which precedes the festival, or on the day itself,

billets follows their recitation; this is a form of preaching which requires the greatest care, precisely because it ought to be very uplifting and yet very familiar—nothing needs to be more perfect. It corresponds to what has been explained in the *billet*, presents it under a more lively, more impressive form, completes it, or, in summing it up, engraves it more deeply on mind and heart. By this means the children find that they have been thoroughly instructed in the festival without any trouble, and with an ever-increasing interest.

In truth, the explanation of the *billets*, if well done, produces a very great effect. This custom of *billets*, gentlemen, is one of the traditions which we should be most anxious to keep up, because it is one which is most enjoyable and useful; and if it imposes some labour and trouble on the Catechists, that is no reason for damping their zeal, rather it will excite it.

Moreover, it is well, for these little discourses, to invite some stranger to the Catechism, the sight of whom will impress the children. M. le Curé, the Dean, or some preacher of note, some celebrity, whose presence will enhance the *éclat* of the festival, and whose sympathetic words will charm the children; one, too, who has above all the talent of being short.

For you will see, gentlemen, the danger there is here. If he who is to speak, speaks lengthily, as he will have to speak five or six times, including his own introduction, this will be equal to six or seven sermons. I remember one of my friends among the Catechists telling me of his terror when he saw a certain man arrive who was to give the explanation of the *billets;* he was a man whose habit was to speak without knowing how to come to an end; however, my friend could not hesitate, and at the third *billet*, he, with great politeness, interrupted the explanation; as to the preacher thus interrupted, he was angry with us for a time, but we were able to pacify him, yet, if necessary, we would have half quarrelled with him rather than sacrifice our four hundred children for a

immediately before the Catechism, it is a good plan to bring the children who are to recite the *billets* into the chapel, and make them repeat them one or more times. By this means the children will be warned beforehand of the mistakes they may make, and they will avoid them when they come to recite publicly."

whole hour. No doubt, and this we regretted the most, it was a disappointment to the three children who were thus deprived of the honour of reciting the *Billets* which they had learnt; but it gave great pleasure to the rest, and saved them all from an overwhelming amount of preaching.

The Conferences. We have already spoken of the *Conferences*, where instruction is given to children under the form of controversy, one Catechist presenting objections, another answering them. I only recall them now to say what extreme pleasure they give to children, the lively interest which they take in them, the almost passionate attention they give to them. I remember still those which I heard at the Catechisms of Saint-Sulpice when I was a child, and the great joy which a notice of this exercise always gave us. "Next Sunday is a festival: *there will be a Conference.*" Having heard that, not one of us would have failed to be present for anything in the world.

If this exercise has been well-prepared, so that the struggle between the two speakers is close and energetic, if the discussion is enlivened by flashes of humour, in good taste, it has a wonderful attraction for children, and at the same time it is supplying most impressive and useful instruction. But for this it is necessary that these conferences be well carried on, and I cannot pretend to say that this is a very easy thing. If Catechists desire to give their festivals the great attraction of a *Conference*, they should scrupulously observe the three rules marked out for them by M. Teyssierre:

"The first, never to say anything merely to provoke a smile, anything which is contrary to the gravity of the ministry and to the respect due to the Word of God; the second, never to ask too subtle questions, nor to make objections which shall be easier to remember than the answers, but so that the leader of the conference may always maintain a great superiority; thirdly and lastly, not to make a truth which is affirmed the subject of the objection, but rather to present the object as a doubt, as to which an explanation is required; then the hearers will not be led into error, they will feel beforehand that the leader of the conference has solid reasons to give in answer."

The judicious author of the *Méthode de S. Sulpice* adds the following rule, which is, in his opinion, indispensably

necessary, namely, to say nothing in the conference but what has been agreed upon beforehand. In fact, in an exercise in which it is so easy to be led away, one must be suspicious of surprises, of anything unforeseen.

Another very good exercise, yet more attractive and more bright, and not less thoroughly instructive, is "*the little Pleadings, these little Dialogues,*" so much recommended by Fénélon, and so happily in use at the present day, in which the children themselves express what they think on some subjects, or perhaps explain what among the characters or virtues of the Saints it is which they most admire. Fénélon says *this excites among them a little contention which impresses the truth more strongly on their mind, and forms their judgment.*

Such is the interest of this exercise, that a dialogue, even a poor one, will still be a treat to the children; if it is well done, their interest in it is incredible. It is not only the children who are delighted to listen and to recite, it is their parents also who enjoy nothing so much as to see their children in this character, and they will never fail to come and hear them; now, anything which zeal can find out which will attract the parents to the Catechism with their children, is certainly one of the most useful things one can imagine.

The subject and the children being well chosen, they must be practised in speaking well, and we must make sure, by rehearsals in the chapel itself, that they know it quite perfectly by heart, and are not frightened.

These little scenes, I repeat, recited easily and naturally,[1]

[1] On this point, the following is the wise counsel of the *Méthode de S. Sulpice:*

"When the children have each learned their part of the dialogue, it is necessary to practise them in the chapel of the Catechism; for sometimes the novelty of the character they have to represent confuses them, and they are frightened. Besides, when they have been prepared in this way, they speak in public with more assurance; they put more feeling, more vivacity, more warmth into their repetition, and they are more natural.

"In this preliminary repetition, every child should stand in the place he is to fill on the public occasion, remembering to place that one of the children who will take the character of a steady and good child in the most honourable position, and where he will be in full view of the whole Catechism. They should be separated a little from each other, and arranged so that all the children can see them easily, without being obliged to look

can be quite charming, and they are always eagerly longed for by the children, and would be loudly applauded, if applause found any place in a Catechism.

When there has been a monthly Communion in the morning, the evening meeting with all the parts we have just described ends with the solemn *Salut* and the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

Such are the festivals, such the different ways in which the Catechism can be made pleasant to the children; by such as these they can be made to love and cherish Religion, and its ministers, and their Catechism. It remains for me to speak to you, gentlemen, on the subject of Emulation, and the rewards which excite it. This I will do in our next discourse.

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behind them, which is very disturbing at a Catechism. In the little Catechisms they each stand on a platform, so that they may be seen and heard more easily. Lastly, not to run the risk of so useful and pleasant an exercise failing altogether, each of these children should be given a prompter, who has had a little practice, and he should sit at the side of the child while he is reciting his part of the dialogue. This is always a useful precaution. But care must be taken never to give this office to the Catechists; for during the dialogue they would not be able to keep watch over the other children, and the Catechism would soon be in a state of inattention."

NINTH DISCOURSE.

EMULATION AND REWARDS. GOOD MARKS, IMAGES, SEALS, PRIZES, HONOURS.

We have seen, gentlemen, how the festivals of the Catechism excite and nourish in the children the greatest and purest joy, and all the good feelings which go with it. I have now to discourse to you on rewards, which provide them with yet another pleasure, and moreover give to the Catechist a new and powerful means of influence, by developing Emulation; I mean a quite religious Emulation, quite friendly, and fraternal, a rivalry in knowledge and Christian behaviour.

I.

In everything Emulation is a great power, gentlemen; it is a flame which kindles the heart, an ardour which excites to action. Without Emulation, everything languishes; with this powerful resource, all the living strength of the soul is brought into play, all its resources made use of, and sometimes wonders are produced. Now, young hearts, children, are particularly sensitive to Emulation. It is by this noble passion that their natural carelessness can be conquered, and that they can be brought to make incredible efforts. Happy the Catechists who have the skill to excite it! When Emulation has its place in a Catechism, when the children are rivals one with another in zeal and fervour for knowledge, for good behaviour, for piety, for everything that belongs to Religion, then one may say the success of the Catechism is assured; and if further, Emulation touches the parents—and it may

be so, I have seen it—then the triumph is complete, and souls are wonderfully disposed for the work of God.

For my own part, gentlemen, I have never seen anything more touching, more charming than this Emulation, and these pious rivalries of the Catechism. And this also I have seen, that they leave a lasting remembrance in the heart; that these friends and rivals of childhood, meeting again in the world in later life, seem to be still animated by this jealousy of holiness, and they really become apostles. Not only is the sacred fire not extinguished in them, but they are rivals still in the desire of propagating it.

I ought however to add, that I have sometimes met people of the world, mothers who seem to me to be alarmed at this Emulation, and who fancied they saw in it a danger of encouraging self-love (*amour-propre*) in their children. It is a strange thing, but these same people are not afraid of taking their daughters out on public promenades, where their young hearts are stirred by the most active Emulation, and that not tempered by Christian sentiment; neither are they afraid to bring them out even in those worldly re-unions which are the very triumph of vanity; as if everything there was innocent, and that by a singular exception, the Catechism alone was to be dreaded as a dangerous stimulant to self-love. This self-love, which they so fear may be developed by the Catechism, is made use of as almost the sole lever of education, in the most important things, as well as the most frivolous; everything rests upon it; no disadvantages have ever been seen in it, in fact, its existence seems to have been hardly perceived; but at the Catechism, it suddenly becomes an extreme danger, and on this pretext we find poor children, immediately after their first Communion, taken away by their parents from the Catechism, for which is substituted the public promenades, and as soon as possible, balls; they take them to children's balls at ten years old, and they make them waltz at sixteen. And why? That they may not be exposed to the dangers of self-love.[1]

[1] Self-love! "But this sentiment," says with great truth the *Méthode de S. Sulpice*, "if it is guided by a skilful hand, becomes a remedy against their natural indolence. It creates in them a great respect for the good

There is a lamentable want of logic here, and, adds the *Méthode de S. Sulpice*, an evidently exaggerated view, unless it is not at the bottom an excuse for bad faith or irreligion. The fact is, that Emulation, like everything else, however excellent it may be, may have its abuses; and the Catechism is a delicate thing, as is everything which acts on souls, and this so much the more delicate, as the souls of children are the more tender; but nevertheless it remains that this powerful engine, which sets in motion the most active forces of the heart and mind, may be a precious resource in the hands of a Catechist; that nowhere is Emulation more noble, more legitimate, and at the same time more controlled and more tempered than at the Catechism; that the sacred fire is necessary there, if there is to be movement, generous warmth, life; and that, far from extinguishing it, it ought to be vigorously fanned in every soul.

S. François de Sales certainly had no fear of it, and he understood all its power when he wrote to Sainte Chantal, "As to Celse Benigne, expectations, all noble and great, should be planted in his little soul, in serving God."

S. François de Sales looked upon Emulation as so important for the success of the Catechism, that to excite it in the children, he carried rewards in his pockets. "As often," says Auguste de Sales, "as the boys or girls recited well, or answered his questions intelligently, he gave them images, medals which had been blessed, *chapelets*, *Agnus Dei*, or little books of prayers and other similar things, which he always carried with him for rewards." The learned Cardinal Bellarmin used also to inspirit the children by the attraction of rewards.

The point in this, as in everything else, is to be prudent and skilful, and without taking away from the primitive simplicity of the children, to profit by their very likings and by

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character of another, and inspires them with courage to conquer their faults that they may become equal to him, or even get beyond him."

The *Méthode de S. Sulpice* adds: "We should know how to profit by everything which belongs to children, even their faults, above all by means of curiosity, friendship, honour, love of pleasure, for at that age all these have great power over them, for good as well as for evil."

their self-love to inspire them with a generous Emulation. It is with Emulation as with praises: "Though they are to be feared," says Fénélon, "because of vanity, yet we must try to use them for animating the children without intoxicating them." *Animating them without intoxicating them,* it could not be expressed better. Fénélon adds, "The holy Fathers made the same use of them. It is true, that to be profitable, they must be so tempered as to be free from all exaggeration or flattery, and at the same time, all the good must be referred to God, as to its source. We run a risk of disheartening children, if they are never praised when they do well."

Saint Jerome, in a letter on the education of a young child, recommends that she shall have companions who will excite her jealousy, whose successes shall be to her like goads, piercing her to the quick: "*Quarum laudibus mordeatur.*"

No doubt it will be the case that quite at first the motives which excite the children will be merely natural and human; but very soon, when you have begun to form and educate these young souls, supernatural and Christian motives will come in their turn to sanctify and strengthen the human motives.

Do not forget, gentlemen, that generally speaking, all education supposes and requires two things: first, in the master, devotion, fatherly affection, knowledge; and in the disciple, docility, trust, and a generous co-operation. In vain would the most studious pupil desire to make rapid progress in knowledge, if he had not a well-informed, learned, and zealous master; but alike in vain, and with yet greater difficulty would the most skilful master endeavour to impart knowledge to his pupil and to educate his mind and heart, if the pupil did not go along heart and soul with his master in his efforts.

What is true in all education is above all true in Christian education.

What the Catechists do, is doubtless much, but it would be nothing, if the children, on their side, did not earnestly strive to profit by all their care.

Well, gentlemen, nothing is so capable of inspiring the

children with this courage, this generosity, this ardour, as Emulation. What! There is not a school, not a class, where there are not encouragements for good, studious, and diligent pupils; and would you desire the children to love the Catechism, yet giving them with it nothing but the thought of trouble and punishments; would you expect them to give themselves readily to the gravest of studies, and yet connect with it nothing which may encourage them and give them hope of success? But God Himself has another method with us! And was it not a thought of generous emulation which converted Saint Augustine: "*Cur non potero quod isti et istæ?*" No, he who would banish Emulation from the Catechism, not only understands nothing of the *character of children*, but nothing even of the foundation of Religion, or of the true spirit of Christianity. It would be to condemn its work to barrenness and sterility.

II.

There are two chief ways, gentlemen, by the help of which, the most active and happy Emulation is excited and kept up in a Catechism: rewards, and honours or *dignities*, which are also rewards.

Rewards, gentlemen; for on this point I must still insist, because they put into your hands such an easy and such a powerful means of influence; and this was well understood by the numerous Councils, which, taking no notice of the foolish scruple we have lately spoken of, so often and so strongly have recommended: "In order that Catechisms may be diligently frequented," says a Council of 1603, "the Emulation of the young children must be excited by rewards, and a thousand other devices of this sort." A Council of Constance, in the year 1609,[1] says also: "To make a Catechism succeed,

[1] *Constit. Synodal-dioeces. Constant.* "Sumptus, si qui necessarii sunt, vel pro puerorum munusculis, vel alias pro cujuslibet loci commoditate, ex ærario publico, aut ex redditibus patroni, seu fabricæ ecclesiarum subministrent; nihil enim in meliores usus collocari potest, quam quod ad recte instituendam juventutem, et à teneris annis ad pietatem imbuendam, impenditur." *Synod. Gandavens.*, ann. 1650, p. 713.

there must be attractive rewards." A Council of Antwerp, in 1610, expressly recommends Catechists to buy little presents, and so *excite Emulation among the children.* There are even Councils which recommend that this expense should be charged on the *fabric* of the Church, as there can be nothing more useful.

Rewards of the Catechism consist of engravings, good marks, seals, and books.[1]

Not much, it will be said, but it is a great deal to the children, and this itself is one of the charming aspects of the Catechism, that with such simple means such great effects can be produced. In the first place, *pictures* and *images* are more attractive at this age than we can at all imagine. Who so happy as a child who receives a sacred print as a reward, or another who already has received a great many! I remember myself, gentlemen, at the end of my first year at the Catechism, my delight at possessing seventy-five. But they must be given with discretion and selection, so that they may be a real reward and an encouragement; they must not always go to the same children; they must be often given to those whose efforts cost them the most, and they must not be allowed to take from the value of the good marks and the other rewards. They must, moreover, be given in full Catechism, not afterwards, for then they would lose their effect; unless at least it is something given privately as a mark of a special satisfaction on the part of a Catechist.[2]

Statut. synodal. Archiepiscopatus Trevirensis, anno 1678., tome x. *Concil. german.* p. 63. "Hortamur parochos, ut studeant *in funiculis. Adami*, id est, seriis admonitionibus, quæ paternum animum præferant, ut munusculorum et HONORIS INCITAMENTIS . . . ad doctrinam catechisticam adtrahere. . . ."

[1] Only such rewards as will instruct or edify the children must be given them; the most usual are sacred prints; they may also be given *chapelets* and medals, but above all, books of devotion. It is important only to give books in which no fault can be found, also not to give prints in which the saints are represented in an unbecoming or ridiculous manner; the minds of children scarcely ever lose the first impression made on them by means of pictures. It must besides be remembered that the parents may reap great advantages themselves from their children's rewards; they attach a great value to them, they preserve them carefully, and they take pleasure in reading their books. (*Méthode de S. Sulpice.*)

[2] The interests of good order demand that on the fête-days, the distribu-

The engravings should of course be good of their kind, and good for edification; it is well even to give fewer and to give better, such as the children will be pleased to keep in a portfolio *ad hoc*, or even to have them framed.

They may be given: (1) at each meeting, to each child who has the grand seal; (2) on fête-days, to all those who have given the greatest satisfaction since the last fête; and (3) four good marks are reckoned as worth an image.

There are two sorts of *good marks*, the good marks for *knowledge*, and the good marks for *good behaviour*.

The good marks for knowledge are given for recitation, or they may be won at that *jeu de bons points*, of which we have already spoken, gentlemen, and which excites such lively interest, when it is managed skilfully. They can be won also by the repetition of the Gospel.

The recitation of the Gospel is of obligation to the children who are preparing for their first Communion, but with the others it is voluntary. It is evident, as I have already said, how much the mind and heart of the children would gain, how quickly the knowledge and love of Gospel things would grow in them, if they persevered in committing to memory a page of the Holy Book every week. The Head Catechist should give them every encouragement in his power, and the good marks will be a help.

An exact account must be kept of these good marks, both for their exchange into pictures, and for deciding the prizes at the end of the year, and also as a precaution againt giving always to the same.

The *good marks for conduct*, as I have said, are also given out—except in the Catechism of Perseverance—at the end of each meeting of the Catechism, with a certain solemnity, to the children who have been noticed for their good behaviour and

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tion of rewards be made the last thing, experience proving that the children hardly listen to anything that is said after they have received their rewards, or when they know for certain that they are not going to have any; besides, these pictures hinder them from taking notes, they embarrass them, and would inevitably create distraction, carelessness, and disorder. Therefore, as soon as the distribution is made, the children must be sent away as soon as possible.

attention throughout the whole time. Nothing shows better the power which these little sources of Emulation give to the Catechist over the children, than the wonderful expectation for these good marks, and the extraordinary effect of their announcement; when the Head Catechist, at the end of the meeting, addressing one of the Catechists, says to him, "*To whom will you give your good marks for conduct to-day?*" At that moment, the deep silence which suddenly falls on the already silent Catechism, all eyes fixed, now on the Head Catechist, now on him who is about to speak, all these children so anxious to be named, all these little souls so attentive, so moved; all tells that at that moment the Catechist, so to speak, holds everything in suspense, all are hanging on his word. Generally each Catechist gives two good marks, the Head Catechist, four.

By his manner in assigning these good marks, and also sometimes by mentioning one or two children besides the fixed number, in favour of some who may have been extremely attentive, a zealous and experienced Catechist will find no difficulty in giving an immense pleasure to the children whom he chooses, and a very great encouragement to all. For instance, the Catechist, when questioned by the Head, could say, "I much regret, sir, to-day, that I have only two good marks to give; all the children have been so good! Still, besides the two children I have just named, and to whom I have given the good marks, I have particularly remarked such and such a one, and I am very sorry to be obliged to put off their good marks till next time, when perhaps some others will carry them off."—"For to-day, sir, I will only ask you, if I may, for one good mark for a child who was not very good last time, but who has so profited by the advice I gave him, that to-day he has been a pattern!" The good mark is granted, the child is overwhelmed with joy, and all the others are encouraged to do well.

Thus, in the Catechism, gentlemen, there is, I must say, great delicacy and art required for the management of these young souls; and it is only the careless or narrow-minded who are not conscious of this. I cannot say how much I

regret the mistake that has been made, in certain parishes, of giving up the good marks of conduct; for in this delicate and important art of which we are treating, nothing has such inspiriting and powerful influence.

I have now told you, gentlemen, many ways of exciting zeal in the Catechism; but I have not told you all, I have yet to speak, not so much of something which most pleases the children, but of what greatly enhances the Catechism in their eyes, and gives it an extreme importance in their sight.

And this is necessary, gentlemen; the children must feel strongly, and everything should tend to make them feel it, that the Catechism is a great thing. . . . And for this reason, there must be *dignities* and *dignitaries* in a Catechism.

Here, again, I am aware that I am speaking of a practice which has been given up in some Catechisms. I am surprised at it, and can only explain to myself this unfortunate step either by the imperceptible growth of negligence, or by the small comprehension there must be of all that is most delicate and yet most serious in the management of children. Dignities and dignitaries are indeed, no fancy ornament for Catechisms; they are a powerful stimulant, not to childish vanity, but to the best feelings, those which will bring forth fruit. . . . In all ways, gentlemen, let us honour and exalt the Catechism, and then the children will have the right idea of it, and very soon it will seem to them what it really is, their most serious, and at the same time, their happiest occupation; in short, the important thing at this time of their life.

Dignities are useful, and they are necessary;—for keeping up amongst the children, besides respect and esteem for the Catechism, the laudable desire of distinguishing themselves by knowledge and good conduct;—they give the Catechists the opportunity of rewarding those of the elder ones who deserve it the most; and by their means certain material functions, which are somewhat less suitable to the dignity of the Catechists, can be given over to the children themselves, and this never fails greatly to interest them, they having some personal part in the work of the Catechism.

The dignities, of course, can be more or less numerous, according to the number of children the Catechism contains; but there are always the *intendant*, two sub-intendants, the first and second; the secretary-general, the sacristan, and the assistants.

There may also be one or more vice-secretaries; inspectors of the form-registers, &c., &c.

They all occupy honourable places. Moreover, at the head of each bench or form is a *dignitary* of the second order, called the *head of the form.*

The choir is also honourably placed.

It is not my intention, gentlemen, to enter into the detail of all these functions and their privileges; everything on this head has been said, and well said, by that excellent *Méthode de S. Sulpice*, which once again I recommend to you as indispensable for every Catechist.[1]

I am only speaking now of the *dignities* from one point of view, namely, the Emulation which they keep up in a Catechism, and the great attraction they are to the children, and also the high importance which they give to it in their eyes.

And do you not see at once, that in these dignitaries, you have a certain number of children, bound in honour to be patterns in everything? What may not their good example do for the rest?

Do you not all see that their nomination, their installation

[1] In every Catechism, the first dignity is that of the *Intendant:* (1) He, with the Sacristan, prepares the Chapel; (2) He sees, with the sub-intendants, that the children come into the Catechism in perfect order, and go out in the same way; (3) He receives, from the head of the form, the Analyses of the last Instruction, and gives back those which have been reported on; (4) If any child feels ill, it is his business to take him out; (5) He will sometimes be consulted by the Catechists about the preparation for the fêtes.

The second dignity is that of the Sacristan: (1) He dresses the Altar before the Catechism, decorating it with special care on the fête-days; (2) He lights the candles before Vespers, and puts them out afterwards, &c., &c.

The heads of the forms: (1) They collect the Analyses from the children of their form; (2) They mark on the register of their form the absent children; (3) They are referred to, when there are any difficult questions; for they ought to be the steadiest and best informed in the Catechism.

in full Catechism, their little special meetings, and all that the Catechists will be careful to say and to do on a thousand occasions to show that they treat them with peculiar regard, do you not see what influence this important position gives you over them, and over those who are aspiring to the same honours? What efforts you can arouse with this prospect? And could any more imposing, more honourable, more dignified aspect be given to the whole Catechism? The dignitaries are not chosen permanently, they are renewed, and this again is another way of exciting Emulation.

"When the time for the promotion of new dignitaries draws near," says the *Méthode de S. Sulpice*, "the children must be spoken to about these future appointments, they must be made to look on these dignities as a reward promised to those children who try, by their diligence, their steadiness and their modesty, to become models for the rest. The expectation of these new appointments generally arouses redoubled zeal; for they must have been told several months before that those children who absent themselves from the Catechism, or who come late, cannot be chosen; nor those who do not know their lessons, or who do not answer distinctly; nor those who are careless, who talk in the chapel or make others talk; nor, finally, those who give their parents or their masters any cause of complaint.

"The day of the installation, it is well to invite M. le Curé or some stranger to preside at the ceremony and distribute the prizes. The names of the new dignitaries should be written on a large sheet, and preceded by a formula, which will be read aloud in an emphatic manner."

I do not wish to say more on this point, gentlemen, I will only add one word; it is this, that it is perhaps quite as important to the Catechists as to the children that the Catechism should have this character of gravity, of dignity; yes, that the Catechism should be held in honour, and by all! The respect of one will re-act inevitably and happily on the respect of the others.[1]

[1] The *Méthode de S. Sulpice* recommends further, as a means for keeping up Emulation, that there should be a formal visit, once every year, from M. le Curé, or the Vicar-General, who has charge of the Catechisms throughout the diocese.

The Head Catechists should arrange with the Director as to the abuses to be corrected, and the advice to be given. When he enters, the children stand up, they receive him, singing the psalm, "*Laudate Dominum, omnes gentes.*" He is accompanied by two assistants, one on each side of him. The assistants sit on chairs, and the Director in an arm-chair; these are

I have yet to speak to you of the Analyses, the seals which are set to them, and also of the distribution of prizes. But time will not permit to-day, and I will speak to you of them in our next discourse.

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placed on the altar steps, and facing the children. The same ceremonies are observed if it is M. le Curé of the parish who holds the visitation of the Catechisms. After he has said his prayer at the foot of the altar, and the children are seated, the Director explains the object of his visit, and asks the Head Catechist if he is satisfied with the children. He puts various questions as to application, regularity, earnestness, modesty, knowledge, the *Diligences*, certificates of confession, monthly Communions, &c. The following are the principal questions—

1. Do all the children come regularly to the Catechism? Are there none who absent themselves or who come after the Catechism has already begun? If they have been absent, do they bring notes of excuse, signed by their parents?

2. Do they keep silence? Are there none who turn round at the least noise? or others who shuffle their feet and disturb the whole Catechism? Are there any who change their place without leave? Do they all join in the Hymns, and try to sing properly? During Holy Mass are their eyes on their books, or are they looking about?

3. Do they learn their Catechism well? Do they answer distinctly, and before answering, do they make the sign of the Cross, modestly and devoutly?

4. Are there many children who write *Diligences*, and does their number increase? Do these children conclude their *Diligences* with a practical resolution and a prayer, with the object of correcting any special fault?

5. Do they, every month, bring certificates of confession, as prescribed by the rule? Are many tickets given for the Gospels?

6. Do the Dignitaries fulfil their duties faithfully? Are you satisfied with the Intendant, with the assistants, with the Secretaries? Do the heads of the forms mark exactly those who are absent? Are they careful to let no children be on their forms who are not written in their registers? Which are they among the heads of the forms who give you most satisfaction?

TENTH DISCOURSE.

THE ANALYSES.

The abstract, or the written account of the Instruction given at the Catechism, goes by the name of the *Analyses*, or *Diligences*.

The name of *Diligences* has always been in use in the celebrated Catechisms of Saint-Sulpice. The reason for this name is obvious. The labour they entail is evidently a most certain test of the diligence of the children, and of their zeal for the Catechism.

Numerous and very careful Analyses, gentlemen, are the glory and pride of a Catechism. But is it only this, is not this compilation of Analyses a real and considerable advantage for the children?

It needs but a moment's reflection to understand, gentlemen, all the advantages which must follow the children's writing out for themselves, the teachings on religion which are given them.

You know the proverb, "*Verba volant, scripti manent.*" This proverb applies perfectly here. Instructions, even the best, enlighten the children's mind for the moment, but are quickly effaced from their memory, if they have only heard them; on the contrary, they will enter into their soul, they will be deeply imprinted there, if, after having heard them, they go over them again in their recollection, and, as it were, make them their own by the attentive and serious reflection which the writing of them will entail.

These Analyses, which are so valuable for deepening and

strengthening the instruction the children have received, also help powerfully to form their conscience and to educate their heart by the good sentiments, and above all by the prayers and pious resolutions with which they should conclude them.

In the first place it is evident that the children who are engrossed in taking notes, are of necessity *diligent* and *very attentive*, and cannot for the time either talk or go to sleep, or be inattentive. The Analysis then, in the first place, obliges them to listen; it is already one point gained and a very great point. Another equally invaluable result is that the direct and personal co-operation of the child in his own religious instruction is thus enlisted. In all education, as I have already said, this is a very chief point; education consists less in what the master does than in what he causes to be done. Now, the co-operation which the *Diligences* bring out in the child, is very real and very important. In writing out what he has heard, he says it again to himself, in his own fashion and in his own language, with his mind and with his heart. For it is astonishing to what degree children of that age can reproduce their impressions, and put their soul into what they do; how a child, pen in hand, can bring it all back, but with his own way of thinking and feeling, with his own freshness and simplicity, his own ardour and eloquence. A child who writes his Analysis is deeply impressed by his subject, and if, for instance, the Analysis made is against some vice, he will be angry, he will be indignant at this vice, with an indignation which is very truly in his own soul, and which he pours out as he feels it. I have known children, in consequence of an instruction on lying, and on sins against the sixth commandment, and in consequence of all they wrote themselves on these subjects, and all they felt while writing, I have known them cure themselves of both these vices for ever after.

In the same way, a truth of the faith enters deeply into a child's soul, by means of an abstract. For instance, three Analyses on the life of our Lord, first on His hidden life, then on His public life, abounding in virtues and works of mercy; and finally, on the sorrows of His Passion, and the shedding

of His blood in death; if a child has done this, has written and related all these things for himself, then the adorable figure of the Saviour will be imprinted on his soul in ineffaceable lines, he will love Him, he will venerate our Lord Jesus Christ for ever.

And this is not all: the Analyses are always concluded by a *resolution* and a *prayer;* a resolution which the child makes himself, which he draws out from himself; a prayer which he does not take from a book, and which is not only on his lips, but comes from his heart. Now what is this, but the very initiation of the child into the most serious work of the Christian life? To *resolve* and to *pray*, it includes everything, gentlemen, and it is not easy; it is the very secret of *prayer;* and this great secret of the spiritual life begins to be revealed to children, by means of these written resolutions and prayers which conclude the Analyses.

Yes, defective as these resolutions may be at first, though even they may have to be suggested in the beginning, yet none the less they are personal to the child, they are made by himself, and that not vaguely, but written, defined, they will not be effaced; and the parents, if opportunity arises, will recall them. These prayers, whatever form they may take from a child's pen, and though for a long time they may be only a lisping of the soul, yet not the less are they true prayers, and the best that a child can use, because he makes them himself, in his soul and with his soul. Grasp this well, gentlemen, it is an immense thing to teach children to form prayer in their heart; it will cost them a great deal at first; it is a new language to learn, but however laborious their efforts may be to stammer out this language of Prayer, it will, nevertheless, be hearkened to by God, perhaps even it will be so much the more acceptable to Him. Yes, as says the great Bossuet, He accepts *these half-formed words in childish language, this hesitation of their tender age*, as a mother is pleased with the first almost inarticulate words of her first-born.

But the Analyses are not only useful for this good behaviour at the Catechism, for religious instruction, and for the education of the conscience and the heart; in another order of ideas,

under a literary aspect, experience shows that they have very great advantages; they open the mind of the children, they awaken their imagination and develop it, they give them a certain facility of expression, they are really, in short, a school of style; and thus I have always found that children who had taken pains with their Analyses, when they went to college, had a marked superiority over their companions, though of equal talent; and also mothers have told me a hundred times, how much their daughters were indebted to the Analyses for success in their studies.

The Analyses, then, teach the children to write, and to compose; they have certainly the more humble but yet a very valuable advantage, of forcing them to write legibly, and to be careful with their spelling. They are very anxious to have them in their best writing; they dread lest certain faults should appear in them, from which their ordinary exercises are not always exempt; and all this sort of care which they are obliged to bestow on their Analyses, will clearly be a gain in all their other studies.

And finally, gentlemen, the Analyses supply a strong motive for regular attendance at the Catechism. You see it at once; a child has been present, and has made his Analysis; he must come again the following Sunday to bring it, and then again the next Sunday to hear the report which will be given on it, and to know what has been thought of it. And, moreover, the Analyses are made on a regular course of instructions, they form as it were a complete collection, and it would be a matter of regret if any were wanting.

Moreover, they are kept, bound in nice volumes, and the children come to have the greatest value for them, and they delight to read them; and, gentlemen, they can read nothing better, nothing which will teach them religion better, nothing which will more inspire them with piety. Think, gentlemen, how, long after the Catechism, all these things will touch them; these resolutions made, these prayers formulated in childhood, when they were good, when they were modest, when they loved the good God, when they were happy! If the children write nothing, even if they have attended the

Catechism for several years, and always listened with the greatest attention, in a short time how much of it will they remember? How many things will be for ever forgotten! But what is written remains, and long after perhaps is found; and when all the past life of the soul, preserved in writing on those pages, comes again before their eyes, it awakens both the remembrance of things learnt as well as things felt.

To have thus made the children write out the whole series of Christian truths, once or several times in the course of four, six, or eight years; to have obliged them, throughout that time, to formulate every week a resolution and a prayer, in other words, to repeat so many times the chief actions in the Christian life; I am deeply convinced, gentlemen, that this is the certain way to have generations of Christian men and Christian women, who are thoroughly pious and well-instructed.

But evidently, if the Analyses are to have all these advantages, they must not be made *anyhow;* they must be held in great esteem in the Catechism, they must be looked over and corrected with religious care. It is with this as with many other things; invaluable if you know how to use it, but producing little or no result, if you do not know.

We must see then how the Analyses should be made, so that they may be of real use, and this must be thoroughly explained to the children:

In the first place, the children must take notes; they must come to the Catechism with a supply of paper, and well-cut pencils; they then take their notes as they best can, and *immediately* after the Catechism they should make their Analysis, thoughtfully and intelligently, taking good care to read their notes through from beginning to end before they begin to write, so that they may remember the whole well, and not only write words, but things.

I say *immediately*, because it is the only way of remembering all they have just heard, and recognizing it again in their notes. If there is too much delay, they will forget it all or very nearly all, and will make a very poor Analysis.

Evidently, the children themselves must do it; but it may be really good for them to be sometimes a little helped by

their parents' memories. Besides, it is by no means without its use that the family should be somewhat occupied with the Catechism; if they only help the children a little, if they leave them really all their own work to do, then the help of the mother or sister, or even of the father, and the explanations which will be mixed with it, resulting in a well-made Analysis, though compiled entirely by the child, will not fail to be of great use to him, both in reviving the instruction in his memory, and in keeping it there.

But what is bad, and what Catechists must not tolerate, is when a mistress or assistant-mistress herself, and herself alone, makes an analysis of the instruction, and then dictates it as an exercise to all her pupils, who write it mechanically, as they would any dictation. This false practice ought to be reproved and scouted in a Catechism. It is the personal work of the child which alone can be of any use to him, and it alone is deserving of praise or reward.

Everything must be done then to have Analyses, and to have them in great numbers, and *well done*, well done as to the *groundwork*, but also well done as to the *form*.

In fact, the *groundwork* is highly important; but so also is the form; otherwise the children will not *keep* their Analyses, and consequently will never have the opportunity of reading them again. The children must understand that their Analyses will be kept, and that some day they will be one of the most precious *souvenirs* of their life. It is well, therefore, to recommend that they should all be of the same shape and on the same sort of paper, so that at the end of each year they can be bound, and form a handsome volume, which for each author will have all the worth and value of a *chef-d'œuvre*.

Once more, as I have said, gentlemen, the Analyses will be made by so much the better, as the Instruction itself has been simply and plainly divided, treated with clearness and precision, said slowly enough, and if the Catechist is careful, after every sub-division or proposition, to put a few short questions, in order to make sure that the children quite understand.

The Analyses ought not to be too long, otherwise they will be enlargements and not Analyses. But care must be taken also that the children do not make them too short. For then the substance would suffer from the brevity of the form; there would be no place for those good and pious sentiments which it is so necessary the children should both have and express, thus working themselves at their own religious education. Let us add that in time to come, they will never read their Analyses again, if they are nothing but dry notes, without any pouring out of their heart before God, and thus they will lose a very precious opportunity of reviving their piety, and perhaps of repenting and turning one day to God, if unhappily they have departed from Him.

You will see that children who have followed the course of Instructions of which we have spoken above, and have made Analyses from them perhaps twice, or at least once; if they are constant at the Catechism for eight years, then these children, who will have had besides two years of preparatory Catechism, and the special instructions belonging to the year of their first Communion, and the weekly Catechism, will be as truly and solidly instructed in holy knowledge as it is possible to be.

There are Catechisms in which such Emulation prevails, with regard to the Analyses, that really marvellous results are produced; and with what impatience they look forward to their *report!* (*compte-rendre*).

The *report* on the Analyses may include an animated and short recapitulation of the preceding instruction, a rapid correction of any mistakes made, an explanation of any points not understood; above all, it is an excellent opportunity for giving, skilfully and with discretion, either praise or blame, and for exciting the most generous emulation in the whole Catechism. The criticism should be always tempered with kindness, so as not to cause humiliation or discouragement; and the praise should be given with discretion, so as not to excite vanity. There is quite a natural opportunity here for giving some slight but timely encouragement to such and such a child; or from time to time, for showing the best

way of making an Analysis. Sometimes a few passages of a well-written Analysis are even read aloud at the Catechism; sometimes a touching prayer, or a good resolution, without giving the name of the child (or it may be given, if thought best) from whose Analysis the extract has been made.

It is generally the Head Catechist who makes out the report on the Analyses, with the help of the Catechist's notes who has given the instruction; or sometimes he himself does it.

The seals are the special and immediate reward of the Analyses. They should be always placed on the children's Analyses beforehand, never at the time; their colour shows the respective merits of each: black, or blue, or red, according to the degree assigned to them. The grand seal, the seal of honour, is given to that Analysis which seems the best in every way; but this decision does not always or only depend on the intrinsic merit of the *Diligence;* for in this case, the contest does not go by strict rules, and the Catechist, though he would only give the grand seal to Analyses of real merit, yet he must avoid assigning it too often to the same child; he must make use of this great reward, which is so honourable and so coveted, as one of the most powerful incitements to Emulation.

Such then, gentlemen, are the various rewards, the various helps to Emulation, which are in use in the Catechisms. Many others might be invented and introduced.

Finally, the Catechisms are all brought to a close by a grand and solemn distribution of prizes. It need hardly be said that this last meeting must have all possible solemnity given to it, and that on this day the greater number of the children must be made happy and satisfied.

The meeting should be arranged in the following way:

1. The chapel should be adorned with hangings, and decorated, as for the highest solemnities.

2. To preside at the meeting, some person of consequence, who will give it *éclat*, must be sought for; a Bishop, if possible; or otherwise the *Archiprêtre*, the Dean, or M. le Curé.

3. All the parents ought to be invited, that they may share in the joy of their children.

4. Good hymns, suited to the festival, must be chosen with great care.

5. Good *Billets* must also be recited extremely well, upon questions such as these:

What virtue appears to you the most necessary for living in the world, and at the present time, the most deserving of reward?

What are your sentiments on the knowledge of religion, and why are prizes given to reward it?

Is it important, if we would persevere in goodness, to be constant at the Catechism?

6. There should be a great number of *prizes* and *accessits*. They are given under the five following heads:

I. Prizes of distinction.

II. Prizes for steadiness and industry.

III. Prizes for Analyses.

IV. Prizes for knowledge.

V. Prizes for the Gospels.

The *elders* ought to share equally; besides the five cited above, they have a right to prizes for *perseverance*.

7. The books should be handsome and well-bound; they should be instructive and well suited to the age of the children, and to the degree of knowledge which they possess.

8. Those who have not a prize ought to receive, at least, some pretty images, with the seal of the Catechism, as a remembrance.

In short, all must go away from a meeting such as this, joyful and contented; these prizes and rewards must remain with them as a precious remembrance of the happy days of the Catechism; they will be a strong encouragement to bring them back another year, and to help them to persevere in goodness and Christian fidelity.

Thus you see, gentlemen, the Catechism, this ministry which is occupied with children, and which at the first glance seems so simple—I was going to say so small—a thing, is really an important and great thing, a delicate art, infinitely varied, full of resources both powerful and pleasing. And even this is not all, for here a new aspect of the Catechism presents

itself: it is not only a ministry and a work of teaching, it is a work of government, which, as I had occasion to say to you before, demands and brings out all the manly and strong faculties, the attentive mind, and all the knowledge so necessary in the art of governing. It is a profound initiation into the government of men, and into the administration of a parish.

ELEVENTH DISCOURSE.

THE GOVERNMENT OF A CATECHISM. DISCIPLINE.

For the complete work, the full and entire success of a Catechism, the principal and secondary exercises which we have enumerated will not suffice; neither will the fêtes and the rewards. There needs, gentlemen, yet one essential thing, without which all the rest would be impossible, or at least it would have no fruit; it must have order, Discipline.

Now many things contribute greatly to the Discipline and good order of a Catechism; not one must be neglected.

In the first place, I have already said it, but I repeat, there must be a special place, a Chapel.

The children must be, and must feel themselves to be at home at the Catechism, not only because it pleases them, but that they may behave properly. A Chapel, of itself, gives the children a high and right idea of their Catechism; a Chapel keeps them apart, keeps them together, withdraws them from a thousand distractions, protects them against their own giddiness, inspires them with the consciousness of, and the reverence for, the presence of God; it gives a quite special character to the ministry of the Catechist, it puts a difference between his words and any other words, it confers authority upon him; not the common authority of a master holding a class, but the authority of a minister of God, who tells of the things of God in a holy place, and in the name of God Himself.[1]

[1] The *Méthode de S. Sulpice* should be consulted as to the form which should be given to the Catechism Chapels, so that they may be fitted for everything which is done there (p. 7, &c.).

I rejoice, gentlemen, to see in this diocese of Orléans, a zeal in providing and in building Chapels for the Catechism; I desire to encourage it with all my might. Every time you attain to this, you can reckon it as one of the great successes of your ministry.[1]

A suitable place, the Chapel, being provided, let us now see, gentlemen, what will conduce to this important thing, which we call good order, Discipline, in a Catechism. The following are the points to which the Catechists should direct their attention:

(1) The arrangement of the children in their places; (2) the punctuality both of the children and the Catechists themselves; (3) the entrance of the children; (4) silence the whole time; (5) the departure; (6) the warnings, either in private or public, either individual or general; (7) reproofs; (8) withholding rewards; (9) bad marks; (10) sending away.

Let us take these details one by one:

1. The ARRANGEMENT OF PLACES. This is a very important, I may even say indispensable operation. If there are but thirty, twenty, ten children in a Catechism, it is clear they must not be allowed to place themselves as they like, for then they will be changing their places continually, and it would be difficult, even in a Catechism however small, to recognize them and to note their absences; and in any case the idle ones would be certain to get together, and would make it very troublesome to keep guard over them. I may add that a fixed place pleases the children themselves; to have their own place flatters them, it interests them, and makes them more attentive.

A child who may be tempted not to come to the Catechism

[1] In Paris this is so well understood, that the greater number of parishes in this great town now possess magnificent Chapels for the Catechisms, built with very great care, and at great expense.

In small parishes it is of course not necessary to have such grand Chapels; but it is always necessary to make certain provisions, and to use all available means, that the children feel themselves there as if in a family, as in a sanctuary. And for obtaining what I ask for, every favourable opportunity must be seized. For instance, never hereafter let a new Church be built in the diocese, without reserving in it a special Chapel for the Catechism, simple, but including all the necessary conditions of which we have spoken above.

will say to himself, "They will see I am not in my place," and he will not give way to the temptation.

But the arrangement is an affair which cannot be done without much consideration. The *Méthode de S. Sulpice* says rightly that too much pains cannot be given to the arrangement of places.

It must be prepared, carried out, and kept up. And in the first place, a fortnight at least before the opening of the Catechisms, an exact list of all the children, their names, Christian names, age, and dwelling-place must be obtained, either by writing to masters and mistresses of schools, or giving notice to the parents; they can then be appropriately classed in one or other Catechism; having decided on the children who are to compose each Catechism, the arrangements for placing them in each must be settled.

The children of one school are put together; if any schools have special rights for particular places, those rights must be respected for fear of offending persons whose co-operation may be of use, and whose ill-will would be fatal; yet all right of action on this point must not be given up. As to the children themselves, the inattentive ones must be dispersed among the steadier ones, but taking care that the mischievous children do not spoil the good. With this object the careless should be brought out into full view.

A thoughtful delicacy of feeling, which needs no explanation, will arrange that the poorest of the children shall sit next to those of a somewhat higher class, and these again, next to those who are of a yet higher rank, so that the contrast between each will not be felt. Here we must recognize two things: that, without any doubt, the children are all equal in the house of God, but that still, there are certain social *convenances*, which can and ought to be respected even in the house of God, and still more at the Catechism, and this without any offence against Christian feeling. Experience proves that gradually a sort of fraternity, or even familiarity, springs up among the children.

This entirely Christian familiarity has its advantages; but it demands of the Catechists certain precautions, and obliges

them to use them; the art consists in not arousing the just fears of parents of a higher social grade, nor the just susceptibilities of poor parents, by bringing certain children together injudiciously and awkwardly; the mingling should be effected in such a way, so simply, so naturally, so moderately, that there shall be distinction with separation, *convenances*, but not privileges; nothing to excite pride on the one hand, or mortification on the other; nothing which will not be understood and accepted by all. And if all these little things are cared for, the children of tradespeople will not disdain to come to the Catechism with the children of artisans, and in the country, even the children from the castle will come with the little peasants; and they will both end, I have often seen it, with being delighted to find themselves together. And evidently a certain lustre is given to the whole Catechism by the presence of well-educated children, which is equally gratifying to themselves and to those who share in it.

In any case, the essential point is that the lists are exactly arranged and settled on; and all the children's names written down for each form; and that before the first meeting, the whole shall be written out, very legibly, so that there may be no mistake or hesitation, when the children are called.

If everything is thus perfectly arranged and regulated beforehand, the difficult operation of placing will, as it were, be done of itself, in good order, without any confusion; but if it is otherwise, if the Catechists are in the least embarrassed, if they are wanting in firmness and vigilance, if silence is not kept, the result of the placing will be a state of disorder which will be felt in the Catechism for many weeks.

To manage all this, the children are at first kept at the end of the Catechism Chapel or of the Church; if there are several Catechists, one brings them up by groups; the Head Catechist calls each child in succession, in a very clear and audible voice, and points out to him his assigned place.

When they are all placed, the children are warned in the most explicit manner, that they are never to take any other

place but that which has been given them. This is guarded against with extreme care.[1]

However perfect the arrangement of places may be, it is necessary, from time to time, to make some changes, as some children go away, and others arrive. It is therefore essential to keep an exact *account* of the places, of all the changes which are made, of any places yet to be disposed of; and if there are several Catechists, one of them ought to have the special charge of keeping this account.

It follows from this, gentlemen, that well-kept registers are, I will not say extremely useful, but absolutely indispensable, even if there are but thirty, twenty, or ten children in a Catechism; and they should be kept with the most minute exactness and the greatest care. Any negligence on this head is deplorable, and entails very serious evils.

These registers, distinct from the lists for questioning from, should have several columns; there should be a place for the surnames and Christian names of the children, for their age, and the date of their admission to the Catechism; the address of their school and of their parents; for absences or lateness in coming; for certificates of confession; for the *Billets* and the good marks for the Gospel.

A great many details, it will be said; yes, but these details are necessary, and besides, in everything, perfection depends on details, and, as I have already said, the Catechism is most especially an affair of details, and minute details; but the work, gentlemen, which is done there, the work on souls, is worth the trouble.

2. PUNCTUALITY. Punctuality is an essential condition of

[1] Every Catechism being divided into so many quarters, and every quarter into several forms, at the head of each form is placed a dignitary who is called the *head of the form* (or the first of the form); he is in charge of the children of his form, his chief office being to mark those who are absent, and those who come late. At the head of every quarter, an Assistant is placed; he keeps a watch over the heads of the forms in his quarters, and marks those who are absent from the Catechism. Lastly, an Intendant is set over the whole Catechism; he watches over the Assistants, and ought to be on the watch for everything which may conduce to the welfare of the Catechism. In this way, the children are under the friendly charge one of another, and the labour of the Catechists is greatly lightened. (*Méthode de S. Sulpice.*)

good order, and a proof of zeal for the Catechism on the part of the children. It is of the greatest importance to get them into the habit of arriving punctually at the appointed time, never after it; otherwise order, attention, reverence, everything will suffer. Let it then be a thing quite understood, no indulgence will be shown to lateness in coming; inflexible firmness on this head will prevent all negligence. There is a way of speaking to children who come late, which makes them dread being in this position more than anything in the world. And when it is well known in a Catechism how a late one is received, no one will expose himself to it. At our Catechisms at La Madeleine, no one, whoever he might be, dared to arrive late. When the other children saw one coming in late, they were frightened for him. And sometimes one word, but said in a certain tone, was enough.

No indulgence must be shown either with regard to absences; this is obvious. It is necessary, says the *Méthode de S. Sulpice,* to guard against absences by frequent warnings, and to point out the advantages of regularity, and on the other hand, to show how one single absence may occasion *the sometimes irreparable loss* of some necessary instruction. It is not enough to threaten the absentees with being degraded from their dignities, if they have them, or with being seated alone on a separate form, as a disgrace, and having no rewards given them; but chiefly they must know that every child who is irregular will be shut out from the first Communion, and sent back without mercy to another year.

This severity certainly does not apply in the same way to the Catechisms of Perseverance; but even there, the children must quite understand that their absence, or their lateness, is always observed, observed with regret and carefully noted; and even there, when they arrive late, they should be always expected to bring an excuse for their lateness.

And clearly, gentlemen, if we demand this absolute regularity and punctuality from the children, we must ourselves set them the example. The Catechists ought to be there, all of them, in the Chapel, before the children, and never fail, under any pretext; and also it is most important that the

Catechism shall begin exactly at the given time, whether the number of those present be many or few.[1]

3. ENTRANCE AND DEPARTURE. If the children come in carelessly to the Catechism, they get no good from it; if they go out carelessly, they lose everything. This being quite evident, it is for the Catechists to watch over these times most attentively.

The Catechists should be there, as we have said, before the children; these are to be kept in absolute silence, whether in the Chapel, or the Church; if in the Church, the moment having come, they are to enter in perfect order; they must themselves be impressed by it.

And it must be acknowledged, gentlemen, that it is an edifying sight to see a hundred, or two hundred children entering their Chapel, silently, slowly, their arms crossed or their hands joined; I have seen it, and have seen how they were themselves impressed by it. And, as soon as there are twenty in the Chapel, the hymn for the entrance begins, and this completes the impression.

The same care is observed after the Catechism (while the hymn of departure is sung), to the doors of the Church, and always perfect order is required.

4. SILENCE, ATTENTION. This silence must be absolute; it does not consist only in not speaking a word, but the children must be perfectly still in their place, they must avoid all sound or movement which may cause any disturbance, and they must be particularly careful during the *Prayers*, the *Instructions*, and the *Homilies*, not to use their handkerchiefs nor to cough noisily, nor to move their feet.

On this point the Head Catechist ought to be severely inflexible, and the Catechists must warn by signs, any who are, even involuntarily, breaking the law of *Silence*.

[1] It is a too common temptation to delay, on the pretext of the children not being in sufficient number. If you wait a few minutes, the children who are there will find it tedious, and another time they will not hurry to be there; those who come later, seeing that the Catechism has not begun, will not be vexed at their own unpunctuality. Every one must understand, therefore, that the Catechism will begin rigorously at the appointed time, and then every one will arrive punctually. (*Méthode de S. Sulpice.*)

To obtain Silence and Attention, the chief requisite is firmness; the children soon know the sort of person they are under, they will obey without resistance a man who shows a proper firmness at the right time.

There must be firmness, there must be strong will, but that does not mean brusqueness, or temper, or hardness; very far from it. And the children will not mistake; they see perfectly the difference there is between a brusque, impatient man, and a firm one.

The spirit of order and perseverance, consistency, watchful and attentive zeal, all these qualities of a good Catechist, which the children will not fail to see, add yet more to the authority which comes from firmness, and by increasing their respect for the Catechist, they make docility and obedience more easy.

The children must be absolutely forbidden to turn round, their arms must be crossed or their hands joined, their eyes fixed on the book or on the Catechist; for, as we tell children, you listen with the eyes, as well as with the ears.

To these and other similar measures we must add the rapid and uninterrupted succession of exercises; there must not be even the interval of a *second* between one exercise and another, otherwise some distraction will slip in; we have already said this, but it is well to repeat it here.

And this is perhaps the place to say a word in passing on the clapper (*claquoir*). It is the sign of authority in a Catechism, and it is indispensable for the purpose of giving notice, by well-known and very distinct signals, of all the exercises, for commanding all movements, for enforcing silence, &c., if need be; but it must never be used without a purpose, or thoughtlessly.

Finally, and to keep the children always on their good behaviour, there must, gentlemen, be attentive and constant watchfulness; they must feel that an eye is always upon them, and therefore it is necessary that the Catechists should be entirely occupied in their business. You can easily see that it is not the time to be about anything else but the Catechism, not

even to say the breviary. A lesson always runs the risk of being lost, if it is not supported by example, and the Catechist should be the first in rigorously observing the law of Silence. If it is absolutely necessary to speak, he will do it so softly that no one will be disturbed, and thus the children will learn that the Catechism is a place from whence every idle word is banished.

And we have sufficiently shown that the interest of the instructions, the charm of the fêtes, the attraction of the rewards, everything which makes the children love the Catechism, and above all the spirit of faith and piety, are the most sure means for exciting in them a spontaneous attention, better far than that which is gained by watching and other modes of discipline; yet this is no reason for neglecting these measures, for every help is wanting in keeping these restless natures still.

Therefore to everything we have just said, we must add the following series of measures:

5. WARNINGS, REPROOFS, WITHHOLDING REWARDS, BAD MARKS, SENDING AWAY.—All these modes of discipline, which taken together are a great power, must not be used indifferently; it is a great art, and demanding much tact and attention on the part of the Catechist, to see which of all these different means he ought to use, having regard to the nature of the fault, the character of the child, and the effect which should be produced; and further, when and in what manner it is best to act.

The difficult thing is to find just the right manner, the proper medium between gentleness, which should never become weakness, and severity which should never be excessive. The children must be well convinced that the Catechist does not like to blame and to punish, but that he is a man who will not fail to do so, if it is necessary; that he does it solely for the good of the children, and because he loves them. I do not speak of partiality, there must not be even the shadow of it, or all is lost.

The essential thing is not to speak often, still less to call

out, or burst out into reproaches. One short and firm word, one look even, will often suffice.[1]

A *Warning* should not be given in full Catechism unless quite deserved; do not irritate a character which requires careful handling, and do not wound the feelings of parents, or masters and mistresses of schools. It often happens that you gain much more by speaking to a child privately, than by blaming him in public. He will be pleased with you for sparing him, and it is more easy to say everything to him. It is extremely important that there should be no mistakes in the warnings given to the whole Catechism, nor should they be too abundant, for fear of weakening the authority and diminishing the respect due to them.

It is highly necessary that the children should have a good opinion of their Catechism, and should feel sure that it is in good condition; then they respect it, and will make the greater efforts to keep up its high reputation; but if the whole Catechism is blamed too often, it will go down in their opinion, and henceforth they will respect it less, and will care little to give themselves any trouble for the honour of the Catechism.

Reproofs and *Punishments* come after *Warnings*. For reproofs, even more than for warnings, there needs that exact *proportion* of which I have spoken, and that necessary mixture of authority and kindness which alone causes reproof or punishment to be received in the right way.

One very important rule is to know how, on occasion, *to pour oil on the wound*, as says the *Méthode de S. Sulpice*, so that you may never irritate or discourage these children.

[1] If, for instance, a child is talking, or playing, the Catechist at first might only look at him steadily, while he is still speaking; sometimes while looking at the child who is talking, he will suddenly break off from what he is himself saying; another time he will say, "*I see a child who has already forgotten the advice I have been giving.*" If the child goes on, or falls back again directly into the same thing, he may be mentioned by name, saying, for instance, "*N. N., I should have expected you to be more obedient;*" or perhaps, "*Must the whole Catechism then know you for a disobedient child?*"

Another time a child who talks or plays may suddenly be asked, "*My child,*" you may say to him, "*what has been just spoken of?*" And if he answers nothing or answers badly, you can add, "*That is how a person answers, when he does not listen.*" (*Méthode de S. Sulpice.*)

They are very foolish, it is true, very giddy, very vain, very proud, and too often they are already spoiled and naughty; they so soon, alas! catch the faults of the world; but together with their faults, what lovable qualities! Those even who are naughty are so more on the surface than at the bottom of their heart. Therefore there is always something to fall back upon in their nature, to make them better, if one can find it out and use it. The following advice seems to me to show great wisdom and knowledge of children:

"Have you inflicted a heavy, though deserved, punishment on a child? When the Catechism is over, take him aside (says the *Méthode de S. Sulpice*), speak to him kindly; show him that you only desire his own good, yet make him feel the greatness of his fault, and then be silent for a few moments and watch the effect of what you have said. If the child is confused, if he blushes, if he turns away his head, and lets fall a few tears, you have won him; tell him that you will forget it all. You will have nothing more to fear from him but now and then a little thoughtlessness. But if, on the contrary, he listens coldly and impatiently to all you say, then show him what will be the consequences of his idleness; he will be sent away from the Catechism, he will be turned out publicly, there will be no first Communion for him. Finally, entreat him to think seriously on the salvation of his soul; tell him you are ready to believe that his fault has been only a passing fault, that he will not in future fall into the same; treat him with much kindness, as if forgetting all that has just passed; and you may be sure that all this will work in his little head; for though children are so exceedingly volatile and trifling, they are yet susceptible of strong impressions. If the child does not respond to this first show of kindness, do not be disheartened; often you may have to return three or four times to the charge. Treat him always with kindness, but while giving him proofs of your affection try to awake in him the fear of God's punishments, make him see the necessity of escaping from them, and you will often be surprised at the change which will be worked in the child."

But what are the punishments of the Catechism? Very slight in themselves apparently; but not so in the opinion of the children.

When the Catechism, and everything belonging to the Catechism, comes to be highly prized and esteemed, then there is no greater punishment for a child than to be deprived, because of his carelessness, his irregularity, or his idleness, of a reward which he would have had; to be shut out from all

offices, put down from his place, and degraded. The marks, and the book in which they are written, are a very wholesome object of dread, and the promise to blot out the bad mark, if the child is steadier, or more regular, or more diligent, becomes a wonderful stimulant.

Finally, gentlemen, the children must sometimes be threatened with the highest sentence of the rule, sending away; neither, if necessary, must there be any fear as to putting the threat into execution. But precisely because it is the heaviest of the punishments, you must be more sparing of it than any other; everything must have been exhausted before resorting to it.

Thus, for instance, before coming to the extreme point of sending a child away, he may be placed by himself at the Catechism, alone on a form, away from the others; this mortifying isolation generally has a great effect upon them. It is of course an understood thing, that in the Catechisms of Perseverance, there can be no question of anything of the kind.

It is hardly necessary to say either, that to lay down as a principle for the Catechisms of the first Communion, that the children are never to be sent away, would be not only deplorable, but grievous and wicked. "They will never come back," it will be said. That is possible; but yet, who knows? But the point is, not so much that the children shall make their first Communion, as that they shall not make a sacrilegious Communion; the point is also not to sacrifice to a few children who are so little worthy of regard, all the rest. It is highly necessary for all, that the Discipline of the Catechism should not have an empty threat for its highest penalty, but a much-dreaded reality.

Threats which are never carried into effect soon cease to alarm, the children soon know what to think of them. And moreover, gentlemen, this severity is not only wholesome for the children, it furnishes also a powerful means of influence over the parents themselves. One important aim for the Catechists (we shall speak of it more expressly soon, when we come to treat of the week-day Catechism) is to get the parents to be

deeply interested in the Catechism; to make them take a part, as they ought, in the religious education of their children; nothing is more important for the success of the Catechism than their concurrence, nothing more good for themselves. Therefore we must arouse them in every way, go to see them, talk to them about their child, make them come, if need be; and the question of sending away is one of those by which you most certainly touch them. And thus, if a child neglects his Catechism, or behaves badly, notice should at once be sent to his parents;[1] they will not fail to come, for they think much of the first Communion for their child; and then you can talk to them, say what is fitting, rouse them up themselves, make sure of their co-operation, and in this way an unfortunate child may sometimes be saved, and sometimes the parents themselves.

I have finished, gentlemen, what I had to say to you on this serious subject of the conduct, the government of a Catechism. And in conclusion I repeat: the Catechism is a great and difficult thing, complicated by infinite details; less than anything else can it be undertaken lightly; more than anything else does it demand complete attention, entire devotion; but also nothing repays more for all the trouble, by the immense benefits which flow from it, for the Catechists as well as for the children.

CONCLUSION OF THE SECOND BOOK.

Such then, gentlemen, is the complete course of the principal and secondary exercises, and other modes of action, constituting what I have called the Method of the Catechism.

[1] ". . . , I must inform you that N. N. has been absent . . . . times from the Catechism; he has not known his lesson . . . . times; he is often idle; he has failed . . . . times to bring his certificate of confession, &c., &c. I am obliged to give you notice that this child will be *sent away from the Catechism*, if he does not alter his conduct; and I beg you to be good enough to come and have an understanding with us before the next meeting, if you are able.

"Your very humble and devoted servant,

". . . , Head Catechist."

You understand, gentlemen, that this Method which we have been explaining is simply the *Méthode de S. Sulpice;* that is to say, the Method of the large parishes in Paris, and of all the large towns in France.

In my opinion, it is the only true and complete Method for the Catechism; the only one confirmed everywhere by experience, and which, in its essentials, is practised wherever there are flourishing Catechisms.

In fact, if, setting aside the developments and accessories, we say in few words what definitely constitutes this Method, we find that it is composed of six exercises, of which three are fundamental: Repetition and explanation of the letter of the Catechism, Instruction, and the Homily; and three secondary, the Prayers, the Hymns, and the Admonitions. Now, would it be possible, in any Catechism, to omit a single one of these exercises?

No doubt these exercises may take sometimes one form, sometimes another; and we have not, on our part, intended to lay down as absolute law the details into which we have entered, not even those of which we have spoken with the greatest emphasis and force. But, under one form or another, every Catechism should have for its foundation these six exercises; every Catechism in which any one of these exercises is wanting is an incomplete Catechism, which has one grievous defect, a serious failure in one quarter.

Yes, whoever may be the children whom we have to instruct in Gospel doctrine, and to form in Christian life (that is to say, whatever Catechism we direct), they must be made to learn the letter of the Catechism, and it must be explained to them; further, there must be Instruction, and they must have some exhortation addressed to them, whether called a Homily or anything else. They must also be taught to pray, for there is no Christian life without Prayer; we must put sacred Hymns into their mouth and into their heart, and finally we must constantly give them Counsels on everything, such as their age requires.

Without all this, I cannot conceive a Catechism, if any good is to come of it. But, you will understand, let these

exercises be varied, by all means, according to each one's inclination, or skill, or according to what facilities there may be. All these details, as I have said, are very important for the application of the Method, but still they are not the Method itself; and in this I leave full liberty to the Catechists. The Method itself, its fundamental part, is what I require; it is this which is indispensable. And, in fact, in everything, Method means the quickest and most sure way of attaining an object.

To catechise without method would be losing time, and doing nothing; to catechise with a bad Method is still worse, it is doing harm.

If your Method is not good, the longer you follow it, the further you go wrong: "*Magni passus, sed extrà viam*," says S. Augustine.

Besides, as you have seen, gentlemen, there is no question of a very learned or uncommon method and theory. No; the best methods, those which are the most powerful, the most fruitful, are the simplest.

The only question here is of a simple and practical, an ordinary and popular Method, which pleases these young minds, adapts itself to their frivolity, brings itself to a level with their weakness, and keeps up their attention without too much effort; a Method, in fact, by which we avoid the *obstacles*, and take good *measures* for reaching our end.

Well! such is the celebrated Method, the theory of Saint-Sulpice.

I have said that this Method is followed everywhere, in all the large towns in France, but what I hope to show you is that it is perfectly applicable in the country as well as the town. Experience has shown its excellence everywhere. Without pretending that there are no other ways for zeal to work, you have here, brought together, settled principles, essential rules, and necessary exercises, without which I have never known a Catechism to be really profitable. In short, it is a theory proved by practice, and so much so that there can be no doubt about it.

And, moreover, it must not be supposed that what is called

theory is an unimportant thing—the theory of military art, for instance. What has made Prussia one of the great powers of Europe? A certain military theory. What caused the power of Rome? Nothing but what is called a theory.[1] Substitute anything else for this, you have not the same force, the same power, you no longer govern the world. What has brought France to the highest degree of warlike celebrity? her courage, no doubt, but also her military theory: this theory which an officer should know by heart, and which forms good commanders. No doubt, in this great art of war there needs genius, there needs fire; but without a theory, and an excellent theory, there will be no success.

On this point, as regards Catechisms, I have had much experience. I have seen in Paris, now twenty-five or thirty years ago, men of great merit, giving all their time and all their mind to the Catechisms; yet they effected nothing, there was no result; it was not a work, it was nothing; they had no theory. In a certain parish, priests who were extremely clever, suffered the Catechisms to languish, though they took the greatest pains to make them prosper, because they were prejudiced against a certain theory.

Do not fall into this fault, gentlemen. Have a theory, a method for the Catechism, and let it be a good one; that which practice has confirmed, that which I have been explaining in this book. Apply your best to this, according to your resources, according to your means.

No doubt, I have been showing what is the best way, well knowing that the best is not always easy, but at least it ought to be the rule, the model.

I will say, even, there is but one thing which is essentially, absolutely bad, and that is want of zeal. Without zeal, whoever you may be, even with a good Method, you will never be a good Catechist.

But only have zeal, and zeal will inspire you.

Have zeal, and zeal will suggest to you the most fitting means for attaining the object of the Method.

Zeal, which means the love of God and the love of souls.

[1] See Bossuet, *Hist. Univ.*, 3rd part.

To these children, be pastors, be fathers. Have zeal together with fitting knowledge, with practical experience and sufficient learning; know your religion. In short, love God and love souls, and you will be a Catechist; if not, never.

It is because zeal exists, or does not, that in certain churches the Catechism is the thing which is best carried on, and in certain others it is the worst.

Oh, how deplorable is everything as to this, in certain parishes! Who is given the charge of this great work? often the last comer, because the elders do not wish it; the most unfit, the least skilful, or he who is thought to be so; he who is considered unfit for any employment of consequence: "*Nulli serio ministerio accommodatus,*" it seems to be said, he will always be good enough for that.

In other parishes there is perhaps a certain magnificence about it, but it is no Christian pomp; those who are there are not present at a Christian function; it is not Christian language which is heard, but discourses, affected language, rhetoric. The preacher preaches for himself. The child, the child's soul, is out of sight. He speaks for certain people who come to admire his talent, or what too often they are pleased to call by that name; in short, everything said or done there, in spite of the apparent method, is quite opposite to a Catechism. But what am I saying—a Catechism? They would sometimes blush even to pronounce the word. That is plain. They are giving a course of *Christology*, lessons in *Christology*. Such is the emptiness, such the shameful cowardice, inspired at times by pride and human respect.

But is it not pitiful? And truly, should we not be justified in saying to such Catechists, "*Redi, prævaricator, ad cor?*" Traitor, for is it not a treachery, an odious profanation, as well as a folly? Yes, *Prævaricator*, return to God and to your own heart; that is to say, return to good sense, Christian and sacerdotal; have faith, have zeal. This, in the matter of the Catechism, as in every other ministry, is the beginning and end of all, the foundation and perfection of every Method.

BOOK III.

THE VARIOUS KINDS OF CATECHISMS.

PRELIMINARY DISCOURSE.

THE VARIOUS KINDS OF CATECHISMS.

I HAVE said enough to you, gentlemen, on the *Principles* and the *Method* of the Catechism in general; it is time to speak to you more particularly of the different kinds of Catechisms in use amongst us, and to show you the practical application of the *Principles* and the *Method* to each of these Catechisms.

You will see that the rules laid down by us can be followed out in the Catechisms of most parishes, except for some accidental modifications, either as to the days or hours for meeting, or in some practices which are either not suitable or not possible in certain rural places; and these must be replaced by others.

FIRST of all, gentlemen, it is evidently a most important thing, and a most necessary duty, that every pastor should establish *all the different needful Catechisms* in his parish, according to the nature and the wants of the population.

It must be owned that in the present state of religious indifference in which so many families are living, the curé has very little help, one may say indeed that he has everything against him, in the very difficult work of the children's Christian education; if he desires to save these poor children, he is often obliged to be everything to them, father, mother, pastor, protector of their religion, defender of their perseverance.

In order to fulfil these duties, which are so difficult, and

yet so imperious, it is indispensable that the pastor shall have in his hands all the children, from the tenderest age up to the perilous time of their early youth, and if possible, even beyond that. And for this, different Catechisms are absolutely necessary.

In the first place, the principle must be laid down, that the Catechism should receive the children, before their first Communion, *as early* as possible; and that after the first Communion, it should also keep them as long as possible.

The least that is necessary is that the Catechism should precede the first Communion by two years; but that is too little, and you must try to get the children there from seven or eight years old, and to keep them there beyond the age of adolescence, if nothing hinders.

Only to be concerned with the religious teaching of the children for some time before their first Communion, and let them leave the Catechism almost immediately afterwards, is to do nothing of importance for their souls, absolutely nothing; sure and fatal experience shows it.

What, in fact, becomes, gentlemen, of all these poor children, who, a few days after their first Communion, sometimes the very next day, leave the Catechism and the Church; these of whom I have often heard you yourselves say with so much bitterness, "*We see them no more!*" They pass all their lives without religion or morality, without faith or law, without God, without their Saviour, without any Christian habits, and they become the men we know!

It is of supreme importance that we should attain to something else, that we should do more and do better, or all is well-nigh lost; and what of religion remains amongst us will soon have quite vanished.

What then must be done?

As I have said, we must get the children to the Catechism as soon as possible, from seven, eight, nine, ten years of age *at the latest*, thus to be beforehand with the evil for them, and to begin to cast the first seeds of good in their souls. The great work of Christian education should begin with these young children, or at least be prepared for, from their tenderest

years, and long before the first Communion. Only thus can the education in the Catechisms immediately preparatory to the first Communion be carried out with power and decision. It is after a preparation of several years, that one can then work deeper, in order to enlighten them, to touch them, to change them, to convert them, to bring them to a new life.

It is a decisive time, a critical moment, but also, everything is then favourable for it. The most indifferent parents will willingly forward these religious efforts for their children's good; for—and let us thank God for it—the first Communion is still a great word amongst us, a great power, a great epoch in the life of the children.

But this same work, undertaken seriously and effectively in the Catechism of first Communion, can only be continued and completed in the Catechisms of Perseverance. Without the Catechisms of Perseverance, it all soon fades away, and the husbandman of souls is doomed to say mournfully with the labourer in the fields, "*Longique perit labor irritus auri!* . . . ."

This is not all: if the Catechisms of Perseverance are to be really useful and to complete the great work of a solid Christian education in these young souls, it is of importance to hold them on for as long a time as possible; a year or even two years after their first Communion is not enough. We must attract them, interest them so greatly in these Catechisms, that we shall be able to keep them till they are eighteen, and even beyond that.

You are surprised perhaps, gentlemen, so far are we from what must be done to save people who are perishing, and religion, which is being lost!

But no, after the authorities and examples I have given you, I do not think you will be surprised.

And besides, in good faith, I ask you—since it is a question of bringing up our children in a Christian way, of educating their souls—is any one fully educated before he is twenty?

Is it not true that the advancing years of youth are just the age in which the man is formed and really developed, in which

everything in their souls is strengthened, built up, and definitely fixed?

Yes; and thus a very experienced Catechist wrote to me a little while ago: "*The two first years of perseverance only serve to prepare for the good which the following years will effect.*"

II.

Having laid down all this, it is evident that three different Catechisms are essential, and that they are enough, except in parishes containing from forty to fifty thousand souls.[1] I do not know any parish in this diocese where there need be more.

1. *A little Catechism* to which children are admitted at seven or eight, up to ten or eleven. It can be held on Sunday or Thursday, or on any other day of the week which may be more convenient.

2. *A great Catechism*, properly a Catechism of *Perseverance*, intended for children who have already made their first Communion; they are kept in it till their marriage, if it is possible; —with them are also received the children who are to make their first Communion, becoming afterwards *persévérants*, in that year. This Catechism must of necessity be held on Sunday.

3. A Catechism, called the week-day Catechism, or the Catechism of First Communion; it being immediately preparatory to that great act. It is held for two or three months before the first Communion, and twice or three times a week, hence called the *week-day* Catechism (*de semaine*).

I have said that these three Catechisms are *essential* and *sufficient*.

Essential; you cannot do with fewer, even in the smallest parishes.

In fact, the first Communion demands an entirely special preparation, and consequently a Catechism quite apart, distinct from the little children's Catechism, and from the Catechism of Perseverance.

And besides, *persévérants* of thirteen up to eighteen or twenty cannot be with children, seven, eight, or ten years old.

[1] There are perhaps not *ten* parishes in France with such a population. In Paris there are not more than five or six.

To bring such ages together would only create a medley and confusion, and would make a Catechism impossible.

But if children who are to make their first Communion, then becoming *persévérants*, in the course of the year are admitted to the Catechism of Perseverance, the same inconvenience does not arise; and the advantages of admitting them are evident and have been well verified by experience.

The children of the first Communion, admitted to this great Catechism, begin from that moment to understand the solemnity and the greatness of the act for which they are preparing, they feel that they ought not any longer to be trifling, giddy children, without any steadiness. And above all, by this means they form the habit of coming to the Catechism of Perseverance, and henceforth they look upon it as an engagement.

It is by following this system that the parishes of S. Thomas Aquinas, La Madeleine, S. Philippe-du-Roule, in Paris, have succeeded in forming more numerous and more flourishing Catechisms of Perseverance than anywhere else.

At La Madeleine, where a hundred or a hundred and ten young girls made their first Communion each year, in the following year we often had ninety or a hundred *persévérants;* hardly eight or ten would fail.

By this system, too, three or four Catechists are enough for the largest parishes, and each Catechism can have two Catechists, which is always so desirable, and often quite necessary, because of the great number of children.

With the exception of very large parishes, these three Catechisms are quite *sufficient.*

In fact, the parcelling-out and useless multiplication of Catechisms must be avoided.

Nothing is less favourable for the end which we wish and ought to attain, and sometimes nothing is more contrary to it.

It needlessly increases the labour of the Catechists, and sometimes overwhelms them.

And also it fatigues and dispirits the children.

It takes away from the Catechisms all their interest, all

their dignity, all their emulation, for a large number of children helps greatly in this, and it deprives the Catechists themselves of all real and serious influence.

I have seen large parishes, having several Vicars, where each Vicar had, from All Saints to the Assumption, to hold five Catechisms a week, and for three months seven Catechisms a week, independently of separate instructions given in the different schools of the parish.

But in this way is it possible to do any good?

To justify this parcelling-out and extraordinary multiplication of Catechisms, a great reason is given: by this means, they say, *the children are better taught;* just as in a class, the fewer pupils the professor has, the better he teaches them; so also the fewer pupils the Catechist has, the better he will instruct them.

I do not believe this to be a solid reason. The Catechism is not a class; its subject, its form, its object, its method of teaching do not resemble it the least in the world; we have seen this.

If the Catechism were only a simple instruction, still this parcelling-out of the Catechisms, and division of the children, would not seem to me to help it.

Perhaps you will teach them a little more,—still I hardly think so,—but certainly not better. It will be a cold, dry, lifeless instruction.

And since we are now speaking of instruction and a kind of professorship, who does not know that even a professor and a class have no zeal, no vigour, no warmth, no emulation, if there are not a sufficient number of children. To cut up the Catechisms in this way and to make so many classes of them is to follow the method of the Colleges, where everything is of necessity cold and dry, where there is nothing grand, nothing majestic, nothing touching, hardly anything religious; where there are a few children seemingly almost lost in a great hall, and where the most zealous chaplain, seated in a melancholy way before a table or in a raised chair, is doomed only to instruct them in a professional manner, and to speak to them with no soul.

No, once again; this is not the ministry of the Catechism, it is holding a class; it is hardly instructing their minds, it neither forms their hearts, nor educates their souls.

It is a deplorable reason.

And besides, it is not the true reason; I must speak frankly; there are two other reasons, unless it is done without any reason, and only from habit and carelessness.

The first, and I have been told this by Curés worthy of all respect, is this: the Vicars prefer the division of the Catechisms, because they can have each their own, apart, without any head but themselves, without being obliged to confer and agree one with another, without depending on one another, or on any one.

Well, gentlemen, this reason is even more deplorable than the first; I have written upon it lately, allow me to repeat it to you here.

"To desire to do the work of God alone, each on his own account and in his own fashion, is the most miserable and the vainest thing I know of. For thus everything remains isolated; everything is separate, and thus everything is weak.

"The wicked combine together for evil,—and it is difficult to find two good men who will perseveringly combine together for good. This is true, even among the most devoted. They desire the good, they devote themselves to doing it, provided they may work at it alone.

"But to put oneself out of sight, to be one of several in doing good, to be devoted to great works in company, to share in harmony a mutual responsibility and a common devotion, nothing is more rare.

"How is it that in the Church herself, this spiritual society, Priests, good Priests, find it so hard to make up their minds to the life in common, which would double the strength of the secular clergy, and would be the greatest help towards working for good, both in the parishes and in all good works? How is it that this common life, notwithstanding its immense advantages and all the facilities it gives, which one cannot have when alone, how is it that it is so little relished in our days? It is because in a community life, one must live together, do good together, forget oneself, often think of others, depend on others, bear one with another.

"How is it that the education of youth is such a difficult thing? Because it is essentially a work for several to do. How is it that one sees everywhere the most important works, Catechisms for instance, shared, divided, cut up into fragments, which means that they are weakened, diminished, and sometimes are so miserable? It is because men like

better to be alone, and weak, than to be *the second* with another, and strong.

"It is a sad time when one cannot find two good men who will work together at the same work, and where the slightest causes will hinder the greatest things!"

You must look closely, moreover, at what these Catechisms are, thus divided, with only a few children by themselves, lost in the corner of a Church:

Held by one Priest alone, having no interest, no possible dignity, no emulation, no hymns; the Priest generally without his surplice, &c.

Another reason is alleged for this partition of the Catechists, and I give it the more willingly, since there is nothing approaching to it in this diocese.

It has been feared,—in bringing together a great number of children and several Priests in one Catechism, under the presidency and direction of one Vicar alone, helped by one or more of his brethren,—it has been feared that this Vicar may acquire too great influence in the parish; a specious difficulty certainly, which might enter the mind for a moment, but which has now been admirably solved by all the Curés of Paris, who have all established Catechisms, such as I have described, in their parishes.

In truth, this is no reason at all; a Curé full of zeal, of understanding, and of real worth, need never seriously dread any influence which the Catechisms may give to a Vicar.

I must add one word for the young Catechists, who, moved by an excess of zeal, multiply the Catechisms before the first Communion most unreasonably. I have no hesitation in saying to them, You are abusing this great occasion and the authority it gives you, when you make these poor children come four or five times a week, and five or six months before the first Communion, and sometimes earlier; you burden them, you disgust them, and perhaps for ever after.[1] They resign themselves to the necessity you lay on them, for the time, but

[1] At Saint-Sulpice, where perhaps the children are better taught than anywhere else, the Catechism of the first Communion is only held twice a week, during two months and a half; the recollections it leaves are never lost.

the first Communion made, what happens? You only know too well; they do not come again, you see them no more, you have tired them out.

And I will add further: you do not understand what children are, nor what a Catechism preparatory to the first Communion should be. Is it possible that at their age, with their lively, restless nature, they could endure all this length and slowness? Would it be possible for them, for so long a time, to respond to the deep, the energetic, the ardent action which ought to be the life of such a Catechism? Could you yourselves, for such a length of time, keep up such action? No; if you act thus, you have not even an idea of the work you ought to accomplish; you make a multitude of useless meetings take the place of that strength, that energy, that intensity of pastoral action which you know yourselves to be incapable of.

I declare without hesitation, that a week-day Catechism which lasts longer than three months is a badly-conducted Catechism, and it is more than probable that he who has the direction of it has not even a notion of what ought to be done there.

Of necessity, it is nothing more than instruction, it is a class, it is no longer a Catechism, no longer that *week-day Catechism* which should charm, captivate, draw on, convert and re-conquer souls.

To sum up all then, the week-day Catechism should not be prolonged beyond three months, but the children must come to it well prepared by several years' attendance at the little Catechism.

III.

I MUST in conclusion say a word on the private instructions given in schools.

Monseigneur Affre, Archbishop of Paris, on the 20th of January, 1847, issued an ordinance, which enjoined that all schools, both of girls and boys, should send all their pupils to

the parochial schools, and that private instruction should no longer be given; this ordinance excited great opposition.

Monseigneur Affre then thought it well to consult the oldest and most experienced Catechists of his diocese; they replied to him as follows:

"The advantages of the ordinance are evident to any one who has been engaged in the Christian education of youth. The salvation of souls, ecclesiastical dignity, the arousing and encouragement of priestly zeal are all affected by it.

"Private religious instruction is insufficient, and on this account it has been the ruin of souls. Nothing has more contributed to the religious indifference of the middle classes in Paris. Among the men and women of the middle class who really turn to God at a later age, it is rare to meet with any who have made their first Communion while at school, apart from the Catechisms of their parish.

"Private instruction, besides, does serious injury to the dignity of the ecclesiastical office, which, in these schools, is reduced to little more than an ordinary professorship, paid for more or less, and rarely held in honour; and finally, private instruction, by taking away all the children of a higher intelligence and education from the public Catechisms, leaving them only to children of people who hardly know how to read, makes both the Catechists and the children look upon the parochial Catechisms as only a sort of refuse work.

"On the contrary, when all the children from the schools come to the parochial Catechism, the good of souls, the dignity of the ecclesiastical office, the zeal of the Catechists and of the children, all is helped forward, and to the profit of the common work, that work which is the salvation of souls; and thus is secured the great religious education of childhood and youth in a parish."

After these sketches and preliminary observations, we will now, gentlemen, enter into the practical detail of each Catechism. We will speak in succession of the little Catechisms, the Catechisms of the first Communion, called the week-day Catechism, and finally of the Catechisms of Perseverance; of their necessity, and of the possibility of carrying them out, in country villages as well as in towns.

SECOND DISCOURSE.

THE LITTLE CATECHISMS.

It is with particular pleasure, gentlemen, that I begin upon this subject in our discourses, although evidently the little Catechisms have less *éclat* and solemnity than the others; but they have perhaps something more lovable, more charming, more touching, more paternal, I may almost say more useful to the children, and more productive of good, at least from a certain point of view, than any other in this great work of the pastoral ministry with which we are now concerned.

I will then, in this discourse, speak to you in order of the necessity of the little Catechisms, of their great interest, of the charm even that they may possess; of the object, the special character and distinctive spirit of these little Catechisms; of the way to attract children to them, to make them happy when there, and at the same time diligent and zealous.

And as I have been told that a Rule for these little Catechisms, given in full detail, would be a help to the Curés, particularly those in the country, I will furnish this Rule, both for the Catechists, and for the children themselves.

In this Rule you will see the different parts of which these little Catechisms are composed; the discipline which I think necessary for them; the day, the hour, the length of each meeting; the nature, the order, the length of the little exercises which will be gone through each time; and finally, everthing which will make the children fond of the Catechism, the different ways of encouraging them, of keeping them in order, of exciting their emulation, &c.

I.

In the first place then, gentlemen, I will speak of the necessity of the little Catechisms.

On this point, I have no hesitation in saying that these Catechisms are quite necessary everywhere, and for the following reasons:

First, gentlemen, it is the real beginning, the first effort in the work which is laid on us, the Christian education of youth. Now, in all education, as you know, the commencement, the first beginnings have a supreme importance; all that follows depends on them. And, speaking now only of the first Communion, is it not evident that the near preparation for this great act will be admirably furthered or most sadly hindered just in proportion as the more remote preparation has been well made by the little Catechism or not so? In the first case, how many things will already be accomplished, which will help the work, remove hindrances, make the way plain!

Besides, who does not know the importance of the first religious care bestowed on childhood? Who does not know the immeasurable advantage of turning young hearts early to God, of inspiring them, even while yet in their mother's arms, with the feeling of the love of God? While children yet retain their frankness, their simplicity, perhaps even their innocence, how important to make the most of these happy dispositions which so soon pass away, so soon give place to very different ones, and to terrible faults, which one will have to fight against later on with all the greater difficulty because they have not been fought against earlier.

Too happy may we be, if beginning thus early we may be the first to get possession of these young hearts; too happy if we have not been forestalled by the wickedness which at the present day so early attacks the children, the precocious vices, the depravity, which sometimes even besets their cradle.

For, gentlemen,—and here we come to the chief reason, that which should decide us,—the religious education of children is deplorably neglected, or rather in a great many families is

not thought of at all. I am not speaking only of those families, of which there are now so many, where an irreligious father and an indifferent mother dream of nothing less than inspiring their children with a piety which they do not themselves possess; I go further, even in families where some remains of faith are preserved, are the children really brought up in the knowledge, the love, and the practice of religion? Is their innocence sufficiently guarded? It is painful to say all this; but in fact, how many children have you met with who have been kept from evil? In too many parishes, how many families there are, where these poor children are almost absolutely left to themselves, and to the perils which beset their age! The school where they all come together, even if well conducted, is it a certain safeguard? At the first Communion, for instance, how many do you find, in the school, who have preserved all the purity of their heart?

A pastor, a real pastor cannot remain indifferent to such a state of things; no, in view of all the dangers which surround childhood, he must take his own line, and should do everything to remove these dangers, or to anticipate them.

Well, gentlemen, the little Catechisms are the sole means for saving the children both from ignorance of holy things, and from vice; at an age when they are still docile and manageable, at an age besides when everything is vividly impressed on their soul, it is the easy and the powerful means for inspiring them with a simple and sincere love of God, for the first steps in divine things, leading them on admirably towards more complete instruction; for teaching them, in short, those rudiments of the faith, *rudimenta fidei*, which are the ground and basis of all Christian life; and finally, for training them in the habit of pious practices, without which they are only Christians in name, and would grow up without any feeling of religion, and almost without any conscience.

About all this, gentlemen, I confine myself again to appealing to your own experience. What becomes of all these poor children, when they have been brought up without religion, without any watchfulness, without any of those precautions and attentions which alone can form their habits

aright, and keep their innocence guarded? It is said, and truly, and these rough and hard words are only too often justified, that these little children have only the tastes and the instincts, and the habits of animal life, and in consequence all efforts afterwards to lift them up to a reasonable and Christian life are made extraordinarily difficult. Was it not this very thing which inspired the excellent thought of founding asylums of refuge for children?

And, while the necessity of such institutions for snatching the children from the streets, and guiding them in the first steps of physical and moral training, has been felt, you, you, priests of Jesus Christ, you do not see the still more pressing necessity for the little Catechisms, for beginning in the children the great work of their Christian education! It would be an insult to doubt your sentiments on this point. No, a priest's heart cannot but be deeply impressed with the vital importance of the little Catechisms.

But how, it will be said, how can a Catechism be made interesting to children of this age? We shall see.

II.

THE interest of the Catechism, gentlemen, will be enormous, I will answer for it, if you set about it with zeal!

An objection may be made here; that the rusticity, the stupidity, the small comprehension of these children, particularly in the country, must make this Catechism not only difficult, but terribly wearisome.

I have two very simple answers to this objection; I do not deny that special efforts and great patience are necessary for teaching such young children; it is not easy to bring oneself to their level, to suit oneself to their small powers, to be understood by them; it is wearisome to repeat things, repeat them incessantly, and give all the special attention which these poor children require. But I will say at once, it is a necessity; it is a duty! and I hasten to add, all this trouble, tedious and tiresome as it seems, is really very delightful trouble, if only

one has a heart to feel as one ought about this, if one has love, love for souls, if one is a father; in short, if one is a true Priest!

Ah! no doubt, I grant it, without love it is a terrible weariness to go into such Catechisms, and murmur the lisping, maimed, mutilated language of a child. "*Non enim delectat, nisi amor incitet, decurtata et mutilata verba immurmurare.*" And yet, adds S. Augustine, parents are delighted to have children who oblige them to use it: "*Et tamen optant homines habere infantes quibus id exhibeant, et suavius est matri minuta mansa inspuere parvulo filio, quam ipsam mandere ac devorare grandiora.*" Let us, too, have fathers', mothers' hearts, let us, like S. Paul, be *pater, nutrix, mater;* let us remember the mother-bird, whom S. Augustine, following our Lord, describes as covering the tender little ones with her softest feathers, and calling them with a sweetly plaintive voice, lowering and weakening her voice to attract them to her: "*Non ergo recedat de pectore cogitatio gallinæ illius, quæ languidulis plumis teneros fœtus operit, et susurantes pullos contracta voce advocat.*" Those who do not keep under the shelter of her wings, adds the holy Doctor, become the prey of savage birds, "*præda fiunt alitibus.*" Let us fill our minds with these weighty and gracious words of S. Augustine, and we shall find that in the little Catechisms, if one only has a little zeal and love of souls, the pleasure outweighs the trouble.

The truth is, that in the pastoral ministry, with priests worthy of the name of pastors, there is nothing better, nothing more paternal, nothing happier; there, or nowhere, is to be found the "*pasce agnos meos*"; there again the "*gallina congregans pullos suos sub alis*" of the Gospel, and the "*nutrix fovens filios suos*" of S. Paul. The truth is, that in spite of their saddest faults, the children are never more lovable, more docile, more pliant, and less naughty than they are at this age; you can write everything on these young souls; they offer no serious resistance to your teaching, they bring forward no objection to it; they receive all you say with eagerness, they drink it in sometimes as the flower drinks in the dew, and are entirely penetrated and quickened by it.

A Curé of this diocese, one of your brethren, gentlemen, understood these things well, and he had a truly priestly soul. He wrote to me as follows:

"You see, Monseigneur, I devote myself chiefly to establishing little Catechisms, because young children are more docile. For if one can succeed in guarding them from sin, and accustoming them to religious practices, then they are more certain to make their first Communion well; their whole life will be more certainly Christian, the priest will always be revered by them, and thus their perseverance will be much more assured.

"For it must be acknowledged," adds this good Curé, "that two years is not enough for converting a child, for correcting his bad habits, and making him love the practices of a Christian life. It must be begun sooner."

This, gentlemen, is the exact truth.

Therefore we must not be surprised if the most distinguished priests, Curés of large parishes, the most hardworking and the most busy men, a M. Olin, for instance, and in our own time a certain aged Curé of S. Roch, whom I could name, have not shrunk from holding the little Catechisms themselves, even those composed of the very youngest children,[1] or rather they have found in them the highest charm and attraction. Are these singular, strange examples, gentlemen, rather to be admired than imitated? What Curé could not do the same? Would a Curé lose any dignity by doing it? I say, though without meaning now to enjoin anything, but I say that every Curé who would take the trouble to give his own attention to the youngest children in the little Catechisms, would be respected and blessed by all for so pure and touching a zeal, and I may add that he would do great things towards the regeneration of his parish.

I know well that this is what is done amongst us, in parishes where there are no Vicars, and done too with a zeal which increases daily; but generally in the towns, the little Catechisms are confided exclusively to the Vicars. I understand it, and I

[1] I know even of large parishes in Paris where two kinds of little Catechisms have been established: one for children of seven, eight, or even nine years; the other for children of ten and eleven. And this with the object of providing for all these different children the proper care and instruction most suitable for each age.

am far from making it a cause of blame. A Curé cannot do everything; but it is a necessity that the Curés shall not be strangers in the little Catechisms, they must visit them often, they must show of what importance they think them.

I repeat, all this is done amongst us. But it is not so everywhere else; and even in this diocese I know more than one parish where there are neither little Catechisms, nor Catechisms of Perseverance; where, excepting the Catechism of first Communion, nothing is done for the children, or for the young people.

And then what happens? Listen to the words I am going to quote; they were said to the person who wrote of them to me. I ought to say that it was not in this diocese; but yet, in a parish of 4,000 souls, a young Vicar, active, ardent, but not desiring or rather not knowing how to devote himself to souls, and besides, finding nothing set on foot by his Curé, said with a strange expression of weariness, "I have nothing to do here! I scarcely ever confess any one; and when I have said my Mass and my breviary, I might go to bed for the whole day, quite sure of not being disturbed, except now and then for a sick person."

"I have nothing to do here" . . . in a parish of 4,000 souls! And there was a Curé in this parish of 4,000 souls, but no Catechism of Perseverance, no little Catechism! . . . And this poor young Vicar is surprised that he seldom has to confess any one!

But let us leave these sad things, gentlemen, and joyfully repeat that these little Catechisms can be very interesting, provided that interest, zeal, and affection are brought to the work.

For, I own it, and it should be well understood, these little Catechisms, more so than others, are of necessity a work of kindness, of patience and of gentleness; this is their proper character and aspect, the prominent feature which should strike the children, and charm the Catechist himself. There, quite particularly, the infinite kindness of our Lord should make itself felt, *Benignitas*, all the gentleness, the condescension, the kindness He showed to men, and notably towards children;

for, you know, He loved to have the children come to Him, and to caress them, and to bless them; well, all this ought to be in the Catechist's heart, and should be apparent to the children in everything they see, in everything they hear, in all the tender care you bestow on them; yes, for it must be so, all the tenderest care which a mother lavishes on her little one, when she teaches him to talk and to walk. And in fact, at this age of early spiritual infancy, is it not as it were a new language, and a new way of walking which the little Catechism has to teach?

Such then should be the proper character and the particular charm of these first Catechisms; kindness, gentleness, fatherliness, in a yet greater degree than in any of the others.

III.

And now, what should be the special object of these Catechisms? It is important to understand this well.

The first and direct object should be to awaken the conscience of the children, naturally at first, but above all in a supernatural way; with the sense of duty to develop in them Christian feeling; to bring into their soul and into their life the great thought of God, the fear of offending Him, the desire to please Him, to serve Him, to love Him, and to be loved by Him; to show them what is good and what is evil from the supernatural point of view; in short, to lift them to those ideas and motives of moral and spiritual life, to which they are strangers; and to form in their understanding, in their conscience and life, their first religious habits.

Everything should turn on this one object; to form in these children a Christian conscience, a Christian feeling, which their early home education does not sufficiently develop, or rather, too often it perverts it. For it is too certain, that almost the only thing which has any influence on the education of early childhood in the greater number of families, or in schools, is nothing but self-love, vanity, or at least the frivolity of quite worldly things.

In the little Catechisms then, and I must repeat that it is of supreme importance, and the time and the place are very favourable to it, the object is to teach the young children so much of practical religion as they are capable of, above all to teach them a certain number of *principles* and of *maxims*, which will serve them as the foundations of Christian life; to teach them also the prayers they ought to say, the religious actions they should perform; the faults and defects they should avoid, the examples of holy children which they should imitate. Is not this a useful ministry of tender love and pastoral care?

For all this, one very helpful thing is, in common language, speaking in an ordinary way, to put the fear of God, hope in God, the all-seeing eye of God, in the place of the fear of man, worldly reward, &c.

For instance: "If you know this lesson well, if you say this prayer well, our Lord will bless you."

"How pleased our Lord is to see all His children gathered round Him, and listening to His Word!"

"It is God Himself who is watching you here . . . . and also your guardian angels. . . ."

"You do not see them; any more than I can see your soul, or you can see mine, and yet our souls are truly here, since they speak to each other, and understand each other," &c., &c.

An Italian peasant, who was asked about his child, said, to express that he was dead, "*è andato a Dio.*" That is faith, gentlemen, and the language of faith.

If you do not bring them on to these practical applications, to these habits of the soul, you have not taught them *rudimenta fidei.*

Corde creditur—then it follows that all these principles, with all the sentiments they inspire, must gain admission to the heart.

Above all, the thought, the image of our Lord must be everywhere and always present; all duties, all virtues, to be found *in His life, in His examples,* His love for us, in His mortal life, in His Eucharistic life, in His Passion, &c.

Independently then of the explanation of the Catechism,

and the Instruction properly so called, there is an entirely practical teaching which is, as it were, the groundwork of everything, and which, in the little Catechisms, we can give to the children thoroughly and without hurry.

It is also essential that early, before the Catechisms immediately preparatory to the first Communion—where the children have so many other things to learn and to do—they should know perfectly certain prayers: the *Lord's Prayer*, the *Angelic Salutation*, the *Creed*, the *Acts of Faith*, of *Hope*, of *Charity*, of *Contrition*. It is only in a little Catechism, gentlemen, that there is sufficient time to teach these formulas perfectly to all the children, and to make sure by constant questioning that they know them. You can use—some of you do so—the children themselves, those who can read best, for instance, to help and teach those who cannot learn of themselves.

Those who can read well can teach others not only their little prayers, but also the lesson from the Catechism, and thus become teachers to their little companions, till this lesson is well fixed in their memory.

The Curé will watch that all this goes on properly; and when the prayers or the lesson are well learned, and have been well said, he rewards the child and his young teacher.

It is no less necessary that the children should very early know how to listen to the Mass, that they should know what the holy Mass is. In the little Catechisms, again, we have the leisure to explain the holy Mass to them, bit by bit, and thus to teach them, together with a just and true idea of this great Sacrifice, WHICH IS THE SUPREME ACT OF OUR HOLY RELIGION, the right way of assisting at it.

I venture to say, gentlemen, that when we find so many grown-up people, even among those who attend Mass, who do not know how to join in it, it is because in their early childhood they were not given a sufficient explanation of the holy Sacrifice. In the Catechisms of first Communion there could not be the opportunity for entering into all the necessary details which would make them well understand what is done at the Altar, and the spirit with which they should join in it.

For teaching the children how to assist well at the holy

Mass, I will, gentlemen, give you a method practised by a Curé of this diocese, of which I greatly approve. Every Thursday, before going up to the Altar, he assembles his children in the choir of his church, and explains to them each part of the Mass; afterwards those who can read say aloud the prayers contained in the Manual; it is the place of the master of the school and the Sisters to see that these prayers are said in the right order, and at the right moment, and very reverently. This good Curé has reaped the happiest fruits from this method, and at this moment, it is perhaps one of the parishes in the diocese where the holy Mass is best attended.

How is it, again, that so few people know how to make their Confession? It is for the same reason; they have never been taught. A Confession to be well made demands many things; a person must examine his conscience, must excite in himself contrition; when he presents himself at the Confessional, there is a certain attitude to adopt, a certain language to use, certain forms to repeat; there is an order and a method even when accusing oneself of faults. No doubt all these points should be dwelt upon, and are very much dwelt upon, in the Catechisms of the first Communion; but is there time to do this enough, is there time, with so many children, to enter into the innumerable but necessary details? Above all, is there time to make oneself certain, by questions and individual answers, frequently repeated, that all the children have understood and have learnt? Remember, gentlemen, that without the little Catechisms, the children will come to you for the Catechisms of the first Communion, the greater number knowing nothing, not even how to make the sign of the Cross. Ah! no doubt, in families, the mothers ought to teach their children all these things, but they do not do it, many are not even fitted to do it; therefore it devolves on the Curé to be father and mother to these poor children, truly to give them birth in Christian life; and he can only do this by means of the little Catechisms.

On this important point of Confession I can give you again the excellent method followed by some Curés of the diocese whose letters I have before me.

"Every time that the little children are to make their Confession, and they do it at least four times a year, they all come to the church for three successive days. The two first days they are taught how to examine themselves, how to excite contrition, how to make their Confession well. The third day, after having given them the last advice and the last exhortation, they make their Confession."

These Curés assure me that the children never fail to attend these preparatory meetings.

In teaching them how to examine themselves, these gentlemen read aloud an examination of conscience, which they enlarge and comment upon, dwelling particularly on the sins which children most frequently commit.

Some of these good priests, and it is perhaps the best way, in fact I cannot too highly recommend it, teach the children to make their examination simply on the commandments of God and the Church, and on the deadly sins. They make them repeat aloud every commandment in succession, they then tell them the sins they may have committed against it; and in the same way for the deadly sins, asking the children the definition of each sin, &c.

This excellent method has the great advantage of teaching the children Christian morality in the most vivid and practical way, and of solidly forming their conscience.

It is a very good thing, and follows on from the above method, to accustom the children to repeat each commandment of God and the Church before accusing themselves of the faults they may have committed against any of them. For instance, on the first commandment, "*Thou shalt have*," &c., "I accuse myself," &c. On the second commandment, "*Thou shalt not take*," &c.

To teach them how to excite in themselves contrition, these priests set before these dear children everything which is likely to move them. They talk to them of the kindness of our Lord, of the sufferings He endured to save sinners, then of death, of judgment, of hell, &c.

Finally, to teach them to make their Confession well, they gather them in groups, and there question them on the

prayers they should say before and after Confession, on the order they must observe in accusing themselves of their sins, on the way in which they must listen to their Confessor's advice, do their penance, &c.

You know, gentlemen, that all these things ought to be told to the children quite early, and in very great detail. Well, one has time and the best opportunities for it in the little Catechism, and in this way the little children can be confessed regularly and profitably every two or three months, and more often if they need it.

There, too, all the year round, one has the opportunity for instructing them on the faults and the virtues belonging to their age, principally by means of the Admonitions and little Homilies. With a good plan of Admonitions and Homilies, what excellent things one could say in a few vigorous, striking, and penetrating words, going like arrows straight to their mind and heart, upon lying, idleness, stubbornness, anger, greediness, pride, &c., and on the great Christian virtues, sincerity, love of labour, obedience, gentleness, temperance, modesty, respect for parents, respect for holy places, &c. Is there not a great charm, gentlemen, in treating of such subjects, in giving such important instructions in that interesting way which will suit these young hearts? Even with very young children, and speaking to them in their own language, there may be eloquence; and these little Admonitions, these little Homilies, well prepared, well summed-up, without useless words, limited to a few striking features, can, in their way, be genuine little *chef-d'œuvres* of oratory. I have known some like this; I have seen an audience of quite little children, in spite of the frivolity of their age, engrossed, delighted; and I have seen these little souls eagerly drinking in the holy Word, which really falls on them, as the Scripture says, "*sicut ros in herbâ.*" A Priest in the midst of this interested and attentive little audience, all their quick and bright eyes fixed on him, all their little hearts beating, there is not a more delicious sight. A painter, in a happy inspiration, has thus represented Cardinal Bellarmine holding a Catechism for the children of Capua. Yes, gentlemen, a

little Catechism, in moments like these, when the strong but gentle words of a good Priest are making their impression on the children, is sometimes a heavenly sight.

IV.

BESIDES the *Admonitions* and the *Homilies*, which should be so arranged as to form a small but complete course of morals for children, and which, given in a form befitting their extreme youth, may be quite delightful in their simplicity, there are *Instructions* properly so called.

They are given, at each meeting, according to two plans which are worked through in order, occupying two years. The first is sketched out naturally by the very text of the Catechism, of which it is the literal explanation; the second consists of teaching religion to the children by the very history of religion itself.

As soon then as you are sure that the children know how to make the sign of the Cross properly, and also know perfectly the principal prayers, *Our Father; Hail! Mary; I believe in God; I confess to God;* and the *Acts of Faith*, of *Hope*, of *Charity*, and *Contrition*, then, but only then, they are to learn the little Catechism. The recitation is followed by an Instruction, which should not be given as one set speech, for children of this age could not attend for so long, but it should be an explanation in detail of the lesson which has been recited, given in the form of *bons points*, that is to say, with many questions and answers.

You cannot, gentlemen, go into too minute particulars in giving this explanation, and not only of every phrase in the Catechism, but of every word; even those which seem to be quite clear, yet need to be explained. You must have had experience with quite young children before you would find out how confused everything is in their little heads, and what strange ideas they form of the simplest things, when they have not been sufficiently explained to them, and even after they have been. Some incredible answers will be given, and not

always the fault of the Catechists. Thus a Catechist, very well used to children, in explaining the word *symbole* (Creed) thought it well to say that the word had two meanings, that "it sometimes meant a sign, as when a violet was said to be a sign, a symbol of humility; but that in the Catechisms it meant something quite different, it meant an abridgment of the faith." Believing after this explanation it would be well understood, he asks a child, "What is the *symbole* of the Apostles?" The child answers, "A violet, sir." I remember once having thoroughly explained that souls had no colour. To the question, "Well, my child, what colour is your soul?" The child answered, "It is blue, sir." And many other answers of this kind, proving that one cannot be too clear in one's explanations.

With an audience of this age one can neither be too simple nor too clear, nor can one too often repeat things. Be simple, gentlemen, and familiar—still without triviality—and repeat, repeat without wearying of it.[1] Christian doctrine, notwithstanding its sublimity, can be brought within reach of the simplest and most childish understanding; but this cannot be done without application, and without study. It must be in a manner softened before it can be digested by the children. Let us take the dove for our example, who crushes the grain of corn in her beak before she gives it to her young.

More than this, it is not enough to speak oneself, the children must be made to speak very often, as much as possible; and there are two advantages in this. First, because the more they have to do themselves, the more they are interested; and then you are never sure that a child has understood you, unless you make him repeat what he has just been told. By kindness then, and by all sorts of encouragement, make the children speak in spite of their shyness, make them explain themselves and describe things as they

[1] But it is important to observe here, that the most essential things should be always repeated in the same terms, and in very exact, almost stereotyped *formulas*. It is the only way to make them remembered. If the words are changed, the ideas in these little heads all get confused, they cease to understand anything.

understand them; make several stand up together, excite them, give them the same questions one after another, by this means you will put warmth and life into the Catechism, and you will be really instructing the children; otherwise, whatever you may have said, you will never know if they have understood and remembered it. It is the fault of a great many Catechists, gentlemen, that they do not make the children speak enough. What I have said on this head is important, and I cannot too much insist on it.

For these little Instructions, or rather for these little explanations, multiply also your examples and illustrations, everything which will strike the imagination of the children, everything which, by means of what they know already may bring them on to understanding what they do not yet know; above all, multiply stories, choosing them well, and never telling an unlikely or a ridiculous one; and when you tell them, be short and picturesque, leaving out all useless details, only seizing on the striking features, and those which will bring the thing before their eyes; the children will be quite indifferent to a coldly-recited story, but if it is animated they are transported. It is this ardent and inborn love of stories in children, which makes the second method of instruction, the historic method, so useful. I will speak of this in our next interview.

THIRD DISCOURSE.

THE LITTLE CATECHISMS: HISTORIC TEACHING.

I.

I SAID, gentlemen, in our last discourse, that I would speak to you to-day on the second method of instruction, the historic method, which, as you know, is the method advised by Fénélon.

And in fact, the history of religion, what a magnificent subject it is to unfold before the children, and how interesting and how charming these little instructions may be made to them!

Always on one condition, gentlemen: they must have been well-prepared, well-meditated on, less again for finding out the form and expression most suitable to the children, that which they will understand the best and which will attract them, but more as to the choice of subjects, and sketching out, and marking plainly, their extent. For everything cannot be said, the subject is too large, therefore it is of consequence in the first place, out of this vast whole to set apart that which it is most important to put first, that is to say, that which by its nature will strike the most and will best instruct; then, the subject being determined on, the principal details of it must be settled, that is, it must be well-divided, so that each part of the little instruction may be brought out in its turn; finally comes a last labour, which consists in seeking out the form, the expressions, the manner; a labour one can do without certainly, if one only aims at speaking to the children *anyhow*, if one only wants to *get through it*, as is sometimes said, but a labour which is important and even necessary, if one aims at doing the thing well, at doing any good.

No doubt such young children cannot reason with themselves and judge him who speaks to them, and very certainly you will *get through it*, well or ill. But if they are spoken to carelessly, in a wordy and confused manner, without colour or vivacity or sparkle, without anything which is suitable to this little audience,—and which an easy, though serious preparation would have suggested,—it makes no good impression on them, it neither charms nor moves them, nor even instructs them, for what will they remember of all such words?

But how is it, gentlemen, when I see men like M. Devie, who took the trouble to write, in childish language, the whole explanation of the little Catechism; or like M. Borderies, who has left us many *bons points*, written with the utmost care, questions and answers; when I see such men attaching such importance to even the form of the words with which to address young children, and we would neglect, I do not say to write, but to meditate on, to prepare carefully our instructions for the children! Ah! neither these young souls, nor this great and gracious ministry, deserve such carelessness and such contempt. No, gentlemen, nothing is done well without taking pains about it, the little Catechism, easy as it may seem, no more than anything else.

I should like to give you, as a specimen, an entire instruction of the kind needed; but I can at least, and it may be worth while, propose to you, I do not say impose upon you, a complete plan of instructions, as an example of what is here of chief consequence, namely, the choice of subjects, and the exact and well-marked division of each instruction. As to the style and the fitting language, the age of the children and your interest in them will sufficiently point that out, if only you meditate on it before God.

At the head of this plan of historic Instructions, as at the head of Instructions on the letter of the Catechism, it is essential to place some preliminary Instructions on three points, which, at the beginning of the little Catechism, and perhaps often throughout its duration, should form a subject for frequent admonitions.

II.

PLAN OF HISTORIC INSTRUCTIONS FOR ONE YEAR OF THE LITTLE CATECHISM.

PRELIMINARY INSTRUCTIONS.

1. Prayer.

1. What is praying to God ?
2. Does the good God hear our prayers ?
3. How must we pray ?

Practical conclusion.—To learn perfectly by heart, and to say rightly our prayers, morning and evening.

2. Holy Mass.

1. What is the holy Mass ?
2. At what moment of the Mass is Jesus Christ present on the Altar ? What is the Consecration and the Elevation ?
3. What is the Communion ?
4. What must we ask of God during the holy Mass ?

Practical conclusion.—To come to Mass every Sunday, each with his book, and to read the prayers of the Mass devoutly.

3. Confession.—On what must be done before making one's Confession.

1. Why must we examine our conscience ?
2. What steps must we take to examine our conscience well ?
3. After having examined our conscience and found out our faults, must we resolve to commit them no more, and ask pardon of them from God ?

Practical conclusion.—To examine ourselves well before making our Confession, and to ask of God pardon for our sins, with great sorrow for having committed them.

4. Confession.—On what must be done at the Confessional.

1. What must you do and say on coming to the Confessional ?—Sign of the Cross—Give me your blessing—I confess to God. (*Explain all this thoroughly in detail, and every word.*)
2. Must you tell all your sins ?
3. How must you reply to the questions of your Confessor ?
4. What is making an Act of Contrition, and how must you do it ?

Practical conclusion.—Never to hide a mortal sin in Confession.

5. Confession.—On what must be done after Confession.

1. Must you still ask God pardon for your sins ?

2. Must you be quite resolved not to commit them again?

3. Must you do your penance?

Practical conclusion.—To profit by the Confession you have made, in order to correct yourself.

NOTE.—Evidently these five Instructions are not sufficient for fully instructing the children on the very important points of the Mass, Confession, and Prayer; but they will teach them a good deal, and sufficiently for their first Confessions; the Confessor will help on his side, and afterwards these subjects will be constantly referred to in the Admonitions at the Catechism.

HISTORY OF RELIGION.

1. The Creation.

1. Explain clearly the word and the thing.—To create; to make out of nothing; with a word; not like men. Men do not create. All the kings of the earth together could not make a fly.

2. The six days or six periods.—Describe in a bright and interesting way the series of creation of each day.

3. Creation of man—Creation of the body—its beauty. Creation of the soul—its grandeur—in the image of God.

Practical conclusion.—Power and infinite goodness of God; we must fear and love Him.

2. The earthly Paradise and the sin of our first parents.

1. Beautiful description of Paradise.—God places in it Adam and Eve.

2. The tree of knowledge of good and evil—They are forbidden to touch it—The serpent—Disobedience—The punishment—We are feeling the consequences of it. (*Explain all this well with the help of* Lhomond.)

3. The promise of a Saviour.

Practical conclusion.—Horror for sin.

3. The Deluge and universal corruption.

1. Why did God send the flood?—Noah the only just man—The Ark; Noah enters it with his family.

2. The flood: the raven, the dove.

3. Noah leaves the Ark—The sacrifice—The rainbow—The three sons of Noah, the fathers of the people.

Practical conclusion.—Fear of God and horror of sin.

4. The Patriarchs.

1. Who were the Patriarchs?—What were their occupations? their age? their dwellings? their riches? their virtues?

2. Who are the most famous of the Patriarchs?—The most famous of all?—The call of Abraham, his piety—Promise from God.

3. Sacrifice of Isaac, who is a type of the Saviour.

Practical conclusion.—Faith and confidence in God.

5. The Patriarchs—Isaac and Jacob.

1. Isaac marries Rebecca—Promise from God.

2. Jacob and Esau—The dish of lentils—Isaac blesses Jacob instead of Esau.

3. Marriage of Jacob—The twelve sons of Jacob.

Practical conclusion.—Not to sell one's soul to the devil.

6. The Patriarchs—History of Joseph, type of the Saviour. (*Bring this out well and in detail.*)

1. Jealousy—He is sold by his brethren.

2. He is taken into Egypt—Thrown into prison—God does not forsake him.

3. His innocence is proved—He explains the king's dreams—He becomes chief minister to the king of Egypt—He is made known to his brethren—He causes his brethren and his father to come into Egypt.

Practical conclusion.—Love of innocence and trust in God.

7. Moses and the deliverance out of Egypt.

1. The cradle on the river—The king's daughter—The Hebrew woman.

2. Moses at the court of Pharaoh—The forty years in the desert—The burning bush.

3. The ten plagues of Egypt—The paschal lamb, type of the Saviour—The departure—Passage of the Red Sea.

Practical conclusion.—Confidence in the omnipotence of God.

8. Moses and Mount Sinai.

1. Sinai—The Commandments of God.

2. Forty years wandering in the desert—Water out of the rock—The Manna—The serpent of brass—Death of Moses.

Practical conclusion.—The Providence of God—Trust in God—Fear of God.

9. Joshua, the Promised Land and the Judges.

1. The passage of the Jordan—Jericho—The twelve tribes.

2. The enemies of the people of God.

3. The deliverers; Gideon, Samson, &c., types of Jesus Christ.

Practical conclusion.—To serve God faithfully.

10. David and Solomon.

1. David—the shepherd—The giant—David, king and penitent.

2. The Psalms.

3. Solomon—The temple—Fall of Solomon.
Practical conclusion.—Respect for holy places.

11. The Prophets.

1. What are Prophets?
2. Who were the principal Prophets?
3. What were their principal prophecies about our Lord?
Practical conclusion.—Faith in our Lord.

12. The Captivity.

1. The crimes of the Jews, both of the people and the kings.
2. The Fall of Jerusalem—The captive tribes—Jeremiah on the ruins of the holy city.
3. Sorrow of the Hebrew captives—Remembrance of Jerusalem—Comforting prophecies.
Practical conclusion.—Fear of God and trust in God.

13. Return from the Captivity.

1. The return.
2. The new Temple.
3. The last Prophecies.
4. Silence and expectation of the Saviour.
Practical conclusion.—Desire for the Saviour.

14. The holy Virgin and Saint Joseph.

1. Childhood of Mary, her docility, piety—At the Temple at three years old—Saint Joseph—Nazareth.
2. The Annunciation—The Mystery of the Incarnation—The Visitation.
Practical conclusion.—To love the holy Virgin.

15. Jesus the Saviour.

1. *His birth* at Bethlehem—The shepherds—The Magi—The holy Innocents—The flight into Egypt—The Presentation in the Temple.
2. *His hidden life* at Nazareth—His docility—His labour—His appearance at the Temple at twelve years old.
Practical conclusion.—To grow in grace as well as in age.

16. The Saviour and His public life—His miracles.

1. His baptism—Mystery of the Holy Trinity.
2. Relate His principal miracles.
3. These miracles show divine power and goodness.
Practical conclusion.—To adore and love the Saviour.

17. The Saviour—His public life—His teachings.

1. How He preaches; to the crowd in the desert; or on the border of the lakes; on the mountain.
2. He teaches what to believe, and what to do—Love God, and love our neighbour.

3. Beautiful parables—The prodigal son—The Samaritan—The good Shepherd, &c.

Practical conclusion.—Great trust in the Saviour.

18. The Saviour—His public life—Jesus Christ and the children.

1. The children love Him, they run to Him—The mothers bring them—The children at His entry into Jerusalem.

2. He loves the children—"Suffer them to come to Me"—He lays His hand on them—He blesses them.

Practical conclusion.—Tender love for Jesus Christ.

19. The Saviour—His public life—The Apostles.

1. What were the Apostles?—Their condition—Their call.

2. Which was the chief of the Apostles?

3. What powers did our Lord give to the Apostles?

4. Who are the successors of the Apostles?—The Bishops, who are assisted by the Priests.

Practical conclusion.—Respect for the Priesthood.

20. The Saviour—His Passion—His Death—The mystery of Redemption.

1. Treachery of Judas.

2. Outrages and insults from Caiaphas and the Scribes; from the soldiers and servants, throughout the night—From Herod, who mocked Him—From Pilate, who caused Him to be beaten with scourges.

3. The way of the Cross—Calvary—Darkness—Earthquake—The world saved.

Practical conclusion.—Horror of sin which caused the death of our dear Saviour.

21. The Saviour—His Resurrection and His Ascension—Beautiful and touching accounts.

Practical conclusion.—Desire for Heaven.

22. The Conversion of the world.

1. Pentecost—Descent of the Holy Spirit—The gift of tongues—First preaching of the Apostles at Jerusalem—5,000, afterwards 3,000, Jews converted.

2. Persecutions—The Apostles are beaten with rods, put in prison—We must obey God rather than man.

3. The Apostles go into all the world—S. Peter and S. Paul to Rome.—They are all martyrs.

Practical conclusion.—Happiness of being a Christian.

23. The Martyrs.

1. What were the principal persecutions and who were the most cruel persecutors?

2. Sufferings and courage of the Christians—Rods—Tortures—Crosses—Fire—Wild beasts.

3. S. Agnes—S. Cyril—S. Ignatius—S. Lawrence.

Practical conclusion.—To be ready to die rather than betray Jesus Christ.

24. The Saints.

1. Who are the Saints?—Holy Bishops—Holy Doctors—Holy Hermits—Virgins.

2. Saints of every age, of every condition—Children, young people—S. Geneviève—S. Louis of Gonzaga—Artisans, warriors, kings—S. Louis.

3. The Saints are our protectors: to be invoked. Our patterns: to be imitated.

Practical conclusion.—To labour to become Saints.

25. The Church.

1. What is the Church?

2. Will it always last?

3. In whose Name does the Church speak?

Practical conclusion.—To observe the laws of the Church.

26. The Church.

1. Its teaching—The Creed—The Mysteries—The Commandments.

2. Its Mission—It is teaching and converting always to the ends of the earth.

Practical conclusion.—To love and obey the Church.

This plan of instructions, gentlemen, or any other similar, can be easily developed in a little Catechism, and can be made extremely interesting to the children. Should they be too ignorant or dull to profit by the whole of this historic course, it could be limited to the chief points, and more development given to the history of our Saviour alone. With regard to all this, gentlemen, as to adapting the form to these young and sometimes quite uncultivated minds, the knowledge of your children and your own zeal will be quite sufficient guide; the one thing certain is, that the historic method, if one only knows a little how to apply it, suits them admirably, and implants religious ideas into the most stupid, or the most frivolous minds.

"Make them observe," says Fénélon, "how beautiful and wonderful all the holy stories are, how brilliant and noble, and full of natural pictures. Those of the Creation, of the fall of Adam, of the Deluge, of the Call of Abraham, the Sacrifice of Isaac, the adventures of Joseph, the birth and flight of Moses, all these not only arouse the curiosity of the children, but by showing them the origin of religion, lay the foundations of it in their minds.

"God, who knows best the spirit of the man He has made, has exhibited religion under certain popular facts or actions, which, far from confusing simple minds, help them to grasp and to retain the mysteries. For example, tell a child that in God there are three equal Persons, though but one nature; by dint of hearing and repeating these words, he will retain them in his memory, but I doubt if he will understand the meaning of them. Tell him that when Jesus Christ came up from the waters of Jordan, the voice of the Father was heard from heaven, 'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased;' add that the Holy Spirit descended on the Saviour in the form of a dove; you will have shown him the Trinity enshrined in a story which he will not forget. Here are three Persons whom he will always distinguish by the difference of their actions; all you have now to teach him is that these three Persons are one God. This example is enough to show the usefulness of stories; though they may seem to lengthen the Instruction, they really greatly shorten it, and take away the dryness of the Catechisms, which is felt when the mysteries are only given in an abstract form. . . ."

III.

Another important point, as you will understand, gentlemen, is the order and course of the exercises in these little Catechisms, so that they shall be neither too long nor too short, and should have all possible interest. I am sure that this can be quite easily done, wherever there are Sisters, a good master and a good mistress. In parishes where the Curé is not so fortunate, it is evidently a more difficult work; but it is in these very parishes that it is so necessary, and I will never believe, gentlemen, it is more than your zeal will overcome. Besides, it is very rare for a Curé to be so badly off as to have a bad master and at the same time a bad mistress, and to be able to get no help from either one or the other.

Moreover, gentlemen, to make the task as easy to you as

possible, I am going to add a Rule for the little Catechisms, very simply and clearly made out. The first part of this Rule only concerns the Catechists; it sums up and defines all that is most important for them to remember and practise; the second part specially concerns the children, and should be read to them at the opening, the first meeting of the Catechism.

RULE FOR A LITTLE CATECHISM.

FIRST PART.

I.

THE CHILDREN WHO ARE TO FORM THE LITTLE CATECHISM.

1. Children are admitted to the little Catechism between the ages of seven and eleven.

2. The children of the Catechism of Perseverance who are to make their first Communion the same year, are also to be included in the little Catechism, but only till the opening of the week-day Catechism, properly so-called.

3. In order to give more interest to the Catechism, especially if there are a small number of children, the boys and girls should be together, the boys on one side of the Chapel, the girls on the other, with proper arrangements and precautions.

4. As to the children who are to make their first Communion in that year, it is necessary to be very strict with them on four points: (1) Regularity; (2) Diligence in learning the Catechism and making the Analyses; (3) Steadiness; (4) Regular Confession.

These children will not be admitted to the week-day Catechism, till after they have gone through an examination on part of the letter of the Catechism, and on the Instructions which they have heard.

II.

ORDER AND COURSE OF EXERCISES IN THE LITTLE CATECHISM.

The length of time belonging to each exercise being so regulated that the Catechism shall not last longer than an hour and a half, the exercises of the little Catechism are as in the greater:

(1) Questioning; (2) *Bons Points;* (3) Instruction; (4) the Report on the Analyses; (5) Admonitions; (6) Homily, or the life of some young saint.

In general there is neither Mass nor Vespers at a little Catechism.

1. *Questioning.* This for children from seven to nine, should turn on the letter of the little Catechism; for children from nine to eleven, and also for the children of the first Communion, on the letter of the larger Catechism.

2. "*Bons Points.*" This should be on the last Instruction. It must never be omitted.

N.B.—During the first months, at least, either in the course of the "*bons points,*" or the *Admonitions,* the repetition and explanation of *Our Father, Hail Mary, I believe in God, I confess to God,* and the *Acts of Faith, of Hope, of Charity,* and of *Contrition* must be brought in. It is well to renew this repetition about the middle of the year, and it must be done again just before the holidays.

3. *Instruction.* This is given at every meeting in accordance with two plans, which occupy two years in their development.

The first of these two plans consists in explaining simply, briefly and clearly the letter of the little Catechism. The lessons must be well divided out beforehand, so that each as far as possible may furnish matter for an Instruction, and that there may be neither too much nor too little.

Generally the explanations which are thought necessary should be brought under two or three principal heads, which will form the divisions of the Instruction.

Some interesting stories should always accompany the Instructions; they are a great help in making the explanations understood.

There must be no mistake; these Instructions on the letter need to be *perfectly prepared,* if, which is a necessity, we would have them very interesting, and brought within the capacity of the children by their simplicity, and by the frequent use of familiar comparisons. In particular, they must be very clearly divided. They must always begin by the recapitulation of what was said the time before.

The Catechist should speak in a simple, bright, animated manner, using every possible means to make his words quite intelligible.

He must put many questions to the children, in an affectionate manner; he may even make several stand up at the same time, if he thinks well, that they may answer together.

Not only little stories, but now and then a word to make them smile, should find their place in this explanation, as also short pious reflections.

The second plan consists of drawing out, in the most interesting and instructive way possible, the whole history of religion: before Jesus Christ, from the Creation and the first sin down to our Lord; then the whole life of our Lord and the history of the Church. (This is the plan which I have just given you.)

Here we need only remark that the subject of these Instructions and their divisions should always be given in the form of narrative, and nearly always accompanied *by questions;* in the plan traced out above, this has been already said, more in detail; no doubt the form and the questions may be varied, but a narrative form and a series of questions are always necessary, as for instance for the *History of the Patriarchs and the Apostles.*

And so with the Evangelists, the Prophets, the Martyrs, the Hermits, the Sovereign-Pontiffs.

In the life of our Lord and of the Blessed Virgin, the *Mysteries* of the Holy Trinity, of the Incarnation, and of Redemption, should be historically taught, explained, and applied.

The *Sacraments*, especially Baptism, the Eucharist, and Penitence, should also be historically taught in the life of our Lord.

The teaching as to *morals* should be given in detail in the course of the *Admonitions* of the Head Catechist.

The Instruction, in the little Catechisms, should never last longer than twenty or five-and-twenty minutes.

4. *The Report on the Analyses.* The form and careful writing of the Analyses should be made a great point of.

Also, nearly every time, a well-composed *prayer* and a well-made resolution, taken from one of these Analyses, should be read aloud, in order to teach all the children how to make them well, and also to train them in piety.

5. *The Admonitions.* The Admonitions should always begin by what is most practical for the children; the virtues belonging to their age, the obedience and respect they owe to their parents, their duties towards God; the sign of the cross; their morning and evening prayers, the Acts of Faith, of Hope, of Charity, and of Contrition; how they are to come into the Church, how to behave when there, how to listen to holy Mass, &c., &c. They must be taught, above all, how to examine themselves rightly, and to make their Confession.

These *Admonitions* should be brightened by little stories, and made edifying and interesting.

I knew an excellent Catechist who almost always gave his most important Admonitions under the form of story and anecdote, personifying everything as much as possible. For instance, if he was speaking of a vice to be shunned, or was praising some virtue, he would personify each in the story of a child.

The historical Catechism of Fleury (the good edition), and Fénélon's chapters on the employment of sacred stories for children, should serve as guides and models to Catechists, either for *Instructions*, or for *Admonitions.*

6. *The Homily.* The chief thing in the Homily is to make the children understand the letter of the Gospel. For example, it must be explained to them what a parable is, the meaning of the kingdom of heaven, the

law of the Sabbath, the Scribes, the Pharisees, &c. Then it should finish with a word of exhortation, very simple, but very vigorous, touching and practical.

It is needless to say that all grand oratorical phrases must be avoided; you must never forget that you are speaking to little children.

III.

ON GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS OF ENCOURAGEMENT.

The general arrangements are the same as those at the larger Catechism, excepting that the same hymns should be very often repeated; these little children are not capable of learning a large number. But they must be taught to sing them very well.

The methods for encouragement and emulation are also the same as in the larger Catechism: good marks for learning and for good conduct; pictures, dignities, and festivals. The *patronal festival* should be chosen suitably to the age and nature of the children. For instance, the festival of Jesus blessing the children, for the little boys; the festival of the childhood of Mary, for the little girls.

On that day there is either Mass or Vespers, and even the *Salut* of the Blessed Sacrament. Recitation of *Billets*. Dedication of the Catechism to the Blessed Virgin, after a lively and touching address. Distribution of rewards. Perhaps an installation of dignitaries. A visit to the Catechism from the Dean, or the Archdeacon, or sometimes even if possible from the Bishop; or at all events, from a neighbouring Curé.

At these festivals, also, some of the very youngest children can be brought together from the schools, even those who are not yet admitted to the Catechism; and towards the end of the meeting, after a few words of exhortation, they can be made to repeat the Acts of Faith, of Hope, and of Charity, which they are supposed to use as soon as they come to years of understanding. The new dignitaries should recite the Acts, and one of the Catechists explain them. This little ceremony can be made very interesting and very profitable.

The month of Mary is also a good opportunity for festivals at the little Catechisms.

It is almost needless to add that a conference or a dialogue must always form a part in these festivals.

SECOND PART.

1. Children may be admitted to the little Catechism at seven or eight years of age.

2. The Catechism is held every Thursday at ten o'clock in the morning. It will begin precisely at the hour named.

3. To secure not being late, the children should be at the Church a few minutes before the hour.[1]

4 The children are to come into the Church reverently, remembering it is a holy place, the house of God. On entering, each child will kneel down, say a short prayer, then sit down, and while waiting for the Catechism, say over his lesson softly to himself.

5. At a given signal, the children will begin to walk two and two, in silence, with their arms crossed, or their hands joined, and go slowly into the Chapel.

6. Every child who arrives late, should, when he comes in, make his excuse to the Head Catechist, then kneel in his place, and make a short prayer before sitting down.

7. The Catechism begins by prayer. It is announced by three strokes on the *claquoir*. At the first stroke, the children stand up, at the second they bow to the Altar, at the third they kneel down. They must follow the prayer attentively in their books, and say it also with their hearts.

8. All the children are to keep perfectly quiet during the Catechism; they must neither talk, nor laugh, nor even turn their heads.

9. During the recitation and the explanation, they are to have the Catechism-book in their hands, the better to follow and to listen. During the Admonitions, the Instruction and the Homily, unless they are taking notes, the boys are to sit with their arms crossed, the girls with their hands joined, all with their eyes turned to him who is speaking.

10. The letter of the Catechism must be known perfectly by heart. A child, on being called, will stand up immediately; he will make the sign of the Cross, speaking aloud and clearly, and will then answer without hurrying himself, plainly and distinctly, and so as to be understood by the whole Catechism.

11. The hymns are to be sung reverently and carefully, without any shouting.

12. During the Instruction, whoever can write, should take notes, and on returning home, should write them out clearly; this is called writing a *Diligence*, or making an *Analysis*.

Diligences are the glory of a Catechism.

13. The children are to go out in perfect order and silence, so as not to lose the fruit of their Instructions, two and two, slowly and quietly.

14. No child must go out during the Catechism. In case of an absolute necessity, permission must be asked from the Head Catechist, but only while the hymns are being sung.

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[1] It is supposed here that there is a special Chapel for the Catechisms. In Catechisms where the number is small, the children can come as they arrive into the Catechism Chapel. But in that case, the Curé or a Catechist must be there before them; if not, they would begin to play.

15. The little Catechisms are divided in two parts: in the one are those who can read, in the other, those who cannot. Both parts have seats of honour for those who are foremost in learning, and the best behaved.

16. There are dignitaries in a little Catechism. The dignitaries are the *Intendant* and the *Sub-Intendant* for the boys and for the girls, the heads of the forms, and the aspirants to these dignities.

17. The children must make their Confession once in three months at least, and much oftener in proportion as they grow older, and particularly when they begin to attend the Catechism of first Communion.

18. There are rewards and punishments. The rewards are good marks, pictures, prizes, and the *accessits*. The punishments are bad notes on them, bad marks, and sending away.

19. Good marks are given: (1) for diligence at the Catechism; (2) for good reports of repetition, either of the Catechism or of the Gospel;[1] (3) at the end of the Catechism, to two or three of the children whose conduct has been particularly good.

On certain days there is a distribution of nice pictures; three good marks earn a picture.

At the end of the year there is a grand distribution of prizes. Prizes and *accessits* are given for knowledge, for *Diligences* or Analyses, for recitation of the Gospels, for regularity at the Catechism.

20. Bad marks are given: (1) to the children who come late without sufficient excuse; (2) to the children who do not know their lessons; (3) to the children who talk or behave badly.

21. Children who, after being admonished several times, do not try to amend, will be sent away.

IV.

And now, gentlemen, if we must bring this important subject to an end, and sum up practically all that has gone before, I will say to you: In every parish, without exception, there must be little Catechisms, established with care and thought, carried out with care and thought. Is it so everywhere?

Judging by the answers made to the list of questions which

[1] In parishes where the children can read, the Gospel is always recited and explained; in parishes where the children cannot read, the Curés are in the habit of leaving out the Gospel. In my opinion, this is a great mistake. Cannot they do as a Curé of Dammarie-en-Puisaye always did? He read out the Gospel for the Sunday at the Catechism, and then explained it and commented upon it.

I have addressed to you on the Catechisms, one would be led to believe that the little Catechisms are in existence everywhere. But we must not deceive ourselves; they only exist in principle, which is so far a good thing. But in fact, in a certain number of parishes, these Catechisms are rather only dependencies on the Catechisms of first Communion. All the difference is that the children perhaps have not the same chapter to repeat, and that the very youngest children only come there to listen, without having anything to learn or to say. Some Curés may have special meetings for these little children on one day in the week, but these meetings are held without any punctuality, without order, without regularity, without any connection, without the least authority; so that in these parishes it may be said that the little Catechisms do not exist, or that they are without life, and quite without efficacy for the Christian education of the children.

The little Catechisms in the diocese will not have real life and power, unless they have the special character which belongs to them, unless their object is to supply the special needs of the children; and lastly, unless they have real authority.

It is not enough then to enter the children's name on a register, nor to tell the master or mistress to send them, nor even to urge it on parents by general exhortations; one knows the value of all such means. You must go yourself into every house to seek out the children, "*Per domos. . . Ite ad oves, ad agnos;*" you must go and ask for them from these poor mothers who know not why God has entrusted them with these young souls; you must tell them, tell these mothers what are God's intentions towards their children, what they themselves are bound to do, to bring them up as Christians, and to lead them to that Heaven for which God has created them; in short, to tell them that what they do not do, the Curé is bound to do in their place; and that for this object he is ready to devote himself entirely, if they will consent to trust their children to him, for an hour or two every week.

It is only on these conditions, gentlemen, that you will have genuine little Catechisms, and that you will be able to

work with any effect at the religious education of the children of your parish.

But you must never forget, what is the special object, the proper character, the essential spirit of these little Catechisms.

The one remarkable thing, which ought to strike even the most stupid children in these Catechisms, is the goodness, the gentleness of our Lord, calling the children to Him. The divine attraction, the tenderness of our Lord must be recognized by the children as reflected in the words, in the actions, in the feelings of the Priest who represents Him.

In the Catechism, they must feel, they must be conscious, of all the care, the attention, the anxieties of a mother who is teaching her child to speak and make his first steps. For I repeat, it is just what has to be done in these little Catechisms. These Catechisms are instituted to bring religion into the heart and upon the lips of these poor little children, and to teach them to walk in the way of God's commandments. Hardly any one teaches it to them; it is for the good Pastor, it is for the Curé to do what their mothers hardly ever do, and what the best teachers know very little how to do.

To teach, then, to children the practical religion of which they are capable, to teach them the prayers they should say, the religious actions they ought to do, to teach the faults and errors they must avoid, this is the object of the little Catechism; to form early Christian habits, the Christian instinct in their understanding, their conscience and their heart; to develop in them the moral sense, the fear of God, and the first inspirations of virtue; this is the important thing. The ordinary education of childhood ought to do all this; not only it does not, but often it does quite the contrary, it perverts the Christian sense. Almost the only motive in education, if there is one at all, is the fear of punishment, or otherwise self-love, vanity.

We must then, by all possible means, fashion these young hearts to the idea of duty, to the thought of God, to the desire to please Him, to all pure and noble sentiments. Good and evil, from a supernatural point of view, children know nothing

about; they hardly know of it from the natural and human point of view. Therefore, gentlemen, everything must tend to lift them up to it; everything must combine towards this great end.

You know the way to succeed in it; I have no hesitation in saying that if you set yourselves to it with all your heart, you will reap the most comforting fruits from it, both in the education of the young, and in the sanctification of your whole parish.

FOURTH DISCOURSE.

THE WEEK-DAY CATECHISM, OR CATECHISM OF FIRST COMMUNION.

I.

Among the different Catechisms of which I have had the charge since the early days of my priesthood, there is one, gentlemen, which has left behind the deepest recollections. Nothing in my life, no ministry, no preaching, nothing approaches it, nothing has left such indelible traces in my soul.

In my long career, I have preached a great deal. As Priest, both in Paris, and in other towns where formerly I have had to carry the word of the Gospel, I have seen large audiences, immense assemblies of the faithful gathered round the pulpit.

I have sometimes seen also, thank God, great fruits of the holy Word, the emotion of hearts, the visible tokens of grace in souls, extraordinary conversions; for instance, during a retreat, or on Good Friday, or perhaps at the solemn feasts of Christmas and Easter; and I must own, in this sight there is a sweetness which makes an apostolic man forget all his labours.

As Bishop, I see every year, in Orléans, the great retreat of Holy Week, thousands of men filling the vast nave of our Cathedral, anxious, eager for the word of God; it is a magnificent and touching manifestation of Catholic piety! It is homage rendered to the most sublime ministry of all,

that of announcing the Divine word to such an audience, and in times such as ours!

And yet, I am bound to say, that nothing of all this is, to me, comparable to the recollections and impressions of the Catechism of first Communion; no preaching, however solemn, no ministry, however consoling, can, at least in my opinion, equal this.

How is this? Let me tell you:

For a Priest, there is nothing here below so beautiful, so grand, so interesting as souls.

Souls,—and whatever brings them nearer, whatever creates feeling, love, and admiration for all they have in them which is most noble and most touching; whatever also brings God in them nearer, and makes Him to be more seen, loved, praised, and admired; this, for a Priest, is above everything else.

Well; in the week-day Catechism, there are souls, and God in these souls, as nowhere else.

It is there one is a close witness of the opening out of all their best faculties, all their most active powers; there one discovers what best reveals the greatness, the nobleness, the divine origin of these immortal souls; there in their struggle between good and evil, and in all the sudden changes in this fight, sometimes even unto blood, as S. Paul says,[1] and S. Augustine,[2] one hears their cries, their accents, unlike anything else; one sees in these souls all that is most ingenuous, most tender and most strong.

And God working there, mysteriously and yet visibly, by the operation of an energy and goodness wholly divine.

And all this at the most natural and open age, and the most interesting and most lovable age; the most decisive age also, for it carries with it all the hopes and fears for the future.

What there is, what one sees, what, so to speak, one touches, as in no other ministry on earth, in a week-day Catechism, this it is which is so attractive, so moving, to the Catechist, this it is which leaves in the very depth of his soul such absolutely indelible impressions and recollections.

[1] "*Pertingens usque ad divisionem animæ. . . .*"
[2] "*Sanguis animæ.*"

Yes; if souls in all their beauty, in their susceptibility and purity, if God and the work of God in the innermost soul, with its penetrating sweetness and strength, if all this is to be seen anywhere on earth, it is there, in a week-day Catechism, in the hearts of children, at that twelfth year of their life which the Gospel has marked, "*Factus puer annorum duodecim.*"

But why? And how?

A single word, gentlemen, will explain all: it is because the week-day Catechism is the Catechism preparatory to the first Communion.

And what then is the first Communion?

Here is the secret of all I have hitherto said, and of all I have yet to say.

What is the first Communion?

To understand all which this word means, we must go back to early times, and so come down to the very heart of this great Sacrament of the Eucharist, of all the wonders of God the most wonderful.

We know,—and this is the point of departure for the whole of Christianity,—we know that God had created man to be with Him eternally. The union had begun on earth, it was to continue in heaven; such was the Divine plan.

What happened? By the fall of Adam, by sin, the union was broken. But the infinite goodness of God would not suffer itself to be conquered by the malice of man; God has again set up His primitive plan; that union between the creature and the Creator which was broken, He has brought about again in the most wonderful manner (*mirabilius*, the Church says), by the Incarnation and by Redemption; such is the Christian faith.

And before even this great design of God was, in the fullness of time, realized by our Lord Jesus Christ, we can see, in the holy Scriptures, how God in a manner prepared for it, and how He Himself was continually drawing near to men. Thus, under the patriarchal tents, the ancient relations between the Creator and the creature begin again. God talks with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as formerly with Adam and Eve

in Eden; later, Moses sees Him on the mountain, and converses with Him, "as a man with his friend." And finally, the Lord chooses for Himself a people, in whose midst He dwells, and who with grateful pride ask, "What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them?"

Such were the early beginnings of the re-union between God and man, until, the time being fulfilled, God Himself descended to this earth, and having become one of us, Son of man, like us, He was pleased to converse with men, full of grace and truth; He was Emmanuel, that is, God with us.

And you know, gentlemen, what was wrought by the Incarnation and by Redemption. The Son of God having died for man, He makes atonement for sin, He wins back grace for us, He shuts the gates of hell, He opens again the gate of heaven; that is to say, with the price of His own blood, and by an act of most astounding love, He has formed again that ancient alliance between God and man, both on earth and in heaven.

But there is a yet greater marvel. God has willed to perpetuate, to keep up constantly on the earth these great things, by a scheme which contains in itself the Incarnation and Redemption, and which is both the sign and the means of a marvellous union, a sublime reconciliation between God and man. This work of God, which contains in itself all Divine work, *memoriam fecit mirabilium suorum,* is called, as you know, the Eucharist.

Priceless treasure of the Church, and of every faithful member; for the Eucharist belongs to all and to each, gentlemen. By this august Sacrament, the real personal union of every creature, every child of God with God, is begun already upon earth, waiting only to be finished and perfected in heaven.

And this is why we call the reception of the Eucharist, the *Communion.* By it, in reality, a close, ineffable communion takes place between God and us. God, there, meets us, finds us again, He begins again, as in the ancient days, only with far greater love and mercy, that union which was the first

intention of creation, and which is the divine fruit of the Incarnation and of Redemption: "*Divinæ facti consortes naturæ*," says S. Peter.

These are very high things; but how exceedingly sweet it is, gentlemen, to think that even children are admitted to this adorable mystery, to this *Communion*, to this real, personal, living union with God. What do I say? They are the first to be invited and admitted. "*Suffer the little children to come unto Me.*"

But how necessary it is to prepare them well for this first meeting of their soul with God!

Ah! no doubt they are better and more innocent in their childhood than people more advanced in life; but alas! it must be sorrowfully owned that sin often attacks and spoils the children themselves; not only original sin, that early separation which at the very moment of our natural birth puts us apart from God; but also the sins, sometimes so many and great, which, in consequence of that first misery and the dangers of this sad world, can be committed in very early days. And in fact, the sad state of things comes to pass, that the age which is called the age of innocence, is too often the age of sin and separation from God, as are all other ages of human life. Baptismal grace is rarely preserved, even in children.

When then they have sinned, and have wilfully separated themselves from God, what will bring back lost grace, what will renew the union, which will bring God back to these poor souls? The first Communion. First Communion! What a moment! Of all sacred, divine, touching works the greatest! For it is the first meeting, the first drawing near of a young heart and God! then it is that God finds again His most beloved creature! then that this child for the first time finds again his Father and his God! God, present in this young heart, He, the Eternal, in this child's soul, in truth, in reality! The King of Heaven closely joined to this young soul which by grace is restored to innocence and virtue! Jesus becoming to this soul the *Bread of Life*, for the first time, and for always, if the soul remains faithful! Plainly, gentlemen, there is not

another hour like this, on earth; no work greater or more decisive.

Well, gentlemen, it is for this great day, for this solemn hour, that the week-day Catechism prepares! But, I ask you,—to prepare for such a thing, to bring these children's hearts little by little, through all their inward struggles, into the necessary conditions, so that sin in them may be overcome, that the re-union with God may be accomplished, and that the graces and also the joys of this first Communion may be perfected; to make them receive and relish this heavenly food, which should be the nourishment of their whole life; what a ministry! what a work! what an office! . . . This is properly the work of the week-day Catechism. And therefore I say that there is no ministry more attractive, more touching, more august, either by the work which is done there, or by the impressions and the recollections which it leaves.

And this work is accomplished! How gentle and strong, how effective and how powerful is such a ministry! Every one, gentlemen, who has had to do with it knows it.

How often solemn preaching in great congregations, and even the more pastoral preaching in the *prônes*, how often, alas! is it not useless and lost! Here, with the children, every stroke of the holy Word is struck with a sure blow, reaching to depths we can hardly foresee. No word is more *living;* none more truly a work, *opus ministerii*, as S. Paul says. One may say this; it is the very opposite of that routine ministry, which follows its accustomed course, its beaten road; and which sometimes results (if there is any result at all) in only turning the holiest things into mere formalities, which are all but useless for the great Christian life; formalities which make a pretence, but bring no salvation.

Here there is a power, an interest, a variety, a moving onwards, simply but skilfully arranged so as to bring the child, who is sometimes very far off, and sometimes very low down, to bring him, gradually, to the most admirable state of mind, to most generous sentiments, and sometimes even to the purest heights of the love of God.

The details are simple, but sublime. The first Communion,

set forth from the first, in the distance, and always referred to as the great end to be attained, inspires and gives life to everything. The Catechism goes on in its progress like a drama, like a great poem, if I may so express myself. And do not be surprised, gentlemen, at these words, nothing deserves better to be so called. It is the great drama of the soul, of its return to God, of its feelings, of its struggles for good against evil, of its wholesome sorrows, its combats, its triumphs and its joys. . . . Yes, to any one who has seen and followed it closely, it is an incomparable poem, with constant and daily increasing interest.

From the first, everything interests and fascinates the child, the *very name* of this week-day Catechism (*Catéchisme de Semaine*) which is specially its own; the *time of year* when it is held; it generally takes place in the spring, thus harmonizing, by a happy coincidence, with the renewal of all nature in this lovely season; it is ended, either by the joyful festival of Easter, or with the triumph of the God of the Eucharist in the solemnities of the *Fête-Dieu*, so well described by our poets; its *duration*, which is short, because its action is vigorous and energetic, and this cannot be greatly prolonged; finally, the *series of exercises*, which are skilfully arranged, with a definite end in view; every meeting has its particular intention, every meeting endeavours to produce a definite impression on the soul of the children; this series of impressions resulting finally in a state of mind fit for the supreme efforts of the retreat to work upon, to finish and ripen, as the final rays of the sun ripen the harvest.

Such is the week-day Catechism. Such is the idea, the object, the life of the week-day Catechism. Let us now look into the details; we shall see yet more all the interest, the charm, the dignity, the life which this Catechism has to offer, both for the Catechist and the children.

II.

And in the first place, whence does it derive its name? What are the exercises peculiar to it, what their importance, their character, their particular charm?

When I have answered these questions, gentlemen, I will give you the plan, the rule of a week-day Catechism; then I will explain to you what is the soul of it, what gives it its movement and its life, I mean its three principal periods, and what I call the events of those periods; in short, I will set before you the whole aspect, the whole management, and the whole vigorous action of this Catechism.

1. The object of the week-day Catechism sufficiently shows its importance and its absolute necessity. It is quite evident that neither the little Catechisms, nor even the Sunday Catechisms, can be sufficient as the time for the first Communion draws near; it is indispensable that the children who are preparing for this be brought together in a special Catechism, where they alone, and in a peculiar manner, are the object; where the only thought is to prepare them for that great act which is of such decisive importance for their whole life and for their eternal happiness.

And it is simply because these meetings take place on a week-day, and not on Sunday, that they are called *week-day Catechisms.*

As to the principle of such a Catechism, it must be well understood that it is not an ordinary Catechism, intended simply for instructing and at the same time pleasing the children; in the weekly Catechism there is a hidden, a deep and strong, a persevering and continuous action, such as there must be for making these children better, and preparing them worthily to receive our Lord in the Holy Communion for the first time in their life.

No doubt their instruction in religion must be completed, they must be confirmed in the faith; this is important; but also their soul has to be trained to piety; they must be taught to love God, to pray to Him, to come back into His

favour, to recover their first state of innocence, and for this to do what they have never yet done—understand what evil is, what sin is, and detest it; they must be taught to examine their conscience, to confess their faults with penitence, to break off their bad habits, to form quite contrary habits, of goodness and Christian virtue. In short, it is there, to use the energetic and consecrated word, that they must be wholly *converted.*

This is the object, gentlemen, this is the work; the week-day Catechism is above all things a work of conversion, a ministry in which one goes forth to the conquest of souls; this must be quite understood; for without this, without this strong action on souls, without this complete conversion, without this deep transformation of mind and heart, nothing has been done by it; and if the first Communion is not a sacrilege, yet at least the fruits of it will be very indifferent, and very soon nothing will remain.

2. Let us go into this, and I appeal to yourselves, gentlemen, to your own experience. In the general state of things as regards education, as it is commonly given to children, whether rich or poor, and in the midst of evils which so soon attack them, in what condition of soul do you mostly find them? Do not nearly all of them stand in most extreme need of being changed by some strong and persistent action? The little Catechisms, when well organized and well carried out, no doubt begin something; but they are not enough to complete the work. The first Communion, no longer far off, but near, and in some sort present, is it not the supreme, the decisive time?

This is so true, that the parents themselves sometimes are impatient for it, reckoning upon it for the amendment of a hitherto incorrigible child, whose great and serious and sometimes terrible faults, make them tremble for the future. And remember, gentlemen, there are only a few months in which to accomplish this important and difficult work; for the week-day Catechism once over, you will only see these dear children again on Sundays, even if they do not slip from you at once.

The necessities of life or its greed, or the imperious vanities which govern the world, will hasten to tear them from your arms. Alas! even the most zealous and constant will soon only be seen in the house of God from time to time, and the greater number will disappear altogether, unless you have been able to win over their souls, deeply and entirely, to God.

And in this consists the supreme importance of this Catechism; these few months of the week-day Catechism are for a great number, the only time in their life in which religion has any real action upon them; then, in these three *unique*, decisive months, how energetic and deep ought this action to be, thought out with wisdom, conducted with zeal, kept up, and pursued, if possible, with irresistible strength and sweetness!

I say with strength; ah, how necessary sometimes are the strength and courage of priestly zeal in this work! For even with these young children, there is, gentlemen, a great and sometimes a terrible struggle between good and evil, between virtue and vice, between Satan and Jesus Christ, each claiming their soul. For this one has sometimes to make supreme efforts; and if these poor little souls are to be won to Jesus Christ and to virtue, one must not only give oneself up entirely and without reserve, but even as S. Paul says, "unto blood," for the resistance to be encountered is sometimes prodigious.

And yet it is right to say that, in general, the children give themselves to it quite happily, and come with really favourable dispositions to this Catechism, and it is this very thing which gives so much power to the Catechist's words, and which gives this Catechism its special character and all its charm. It is this which causes the grand sacerdotal action to be exercised there so strongly and so effectively, so that the heart is deeply worked upon and moved, and indelible impressions are produced, the whole life turned, and sometimes for ever, to virtue, and the priest of Jesus Christ filled with a comfort to which nothing else is equal.

3. For my own part, I have told you, gentlemen, what has been my own experience, in all my ministry as a priest: I have

known nothing comparable to a week-day Catechism, well carried out.

All the affectionate solicitude which zeal feels, all the devices which zeal can invent, all the devotion which zeal inspires; all the labour and also all the consolation felt in "travailing in birth" for souls; all the best and most lovable features in these fresh, open, and confiding hearts; words of unction and of power, the piety of holy joys, attractive and enchanting festivals; all this is to be found in this Catechism, and the sweet but irresistible influence which results from it cannot be described in words; what passes there, what is produced, what divine operations take place in the innermost soul, what heroic efforts, what earnest prayers, what searching repentance, what lively and pure joys, what sublime love of God; all this, gentlemen, I give up attempting to describe to you; these things are felt and cannot be defined; they must have been seen, they must have been practised, they must have been experienced, before any just idea can be formed of them. But all this makes up this drama, this incomparable poem of which I spoke.

To say it in two words, gentlemen, the week-day Catechism is the whole of religion, that is to say, it consists in an entire inward renewal, and all the spiritual and moral progress which that renewal effects in souls; it is always a beautiful and touching thing; but here, working on children, when one knows how to stir them, it has a heavenly charm, and nearly always unfailing results.

The children, moreover, however little we may have been able to tell them of it, have such a high idea of this Catechism and such an earnest desire for it, that nothing can describe the expectation they are in. Instinctively, and hardly conscious themselves why, they feel that this Catechism, held on unusual days, and with something special and more solemn about it, is not like any other Catechism; and I may add, that the Catechists, when they have the consciousness of this ministry, when they have the sacred flame in their hearts, are even happier and more excited than the children; for they know what a week-day Catechism is, they know the great

things which the good God is preparing to work, by their means, in the hearts of these children.

III.

No one denies, gentlemen, the necessity of these Catechisms of first Communion; they are universal; but how is the work done? and how ought it to be done? This is the practical question.

Thank God, the children are obliged to make their first Communion; parents still hold tenaciously to this religious act. And this happy necessity brings their children, whether they will or no, to our Catechisms.

But may it not be feared that in many parishes the children rather endure the Catechism than gladly consent to it? Is everything done, with zeal and intelligence, everywhere to make these gatherings of the Catechism pleasant to them?

How many Catechisms of first Communion exist, which have neither dignity, nor pleasantness, nor interest, nor even that religion and piety which can alone make them beloved! In such Catechisms, it must sadly be owned, that the immediate falling away of the children after the first Communion is only too natural.

Before then we attribute this disastrous falling away only to the bad disposition of the children, or the culpable neglect of their parents, must we not make every effort to make these Catechisms such that the children will be attached to them, and that they will not be able to say, the day after their first Communion, "That is over; and now we are rid of the Catechism!" I am not inventing anything, gentlemen; you yourselves tell me these grievous things, even the very words.

To prevent such sad results, which are a grief and sometimes a disgrace to a Curé, and which prepare the way to the ruin of religion in a parish, it is indispensable, gentlemen, to be very well instructed in all that regards these week-day Catechisms, to enter thoroughly into their character and their management, even to the most minute details.

It is true that the Curés have a great help at their command, in the *Manual* of the week-day Catechism; it only needs to be adapted to each parish and to the capacities of the children; but this book, clear as it is, does not explain itself, it cannot by itself take the place of intelligence, and of zeal in that work, which in these discourses I am so anxious to make you see the excellence of.

The first thing to understand is the composition of this week-day Catechism, and what children should belong to it?

1. Children who are old enough to make their first Communion during the year, and who are not thought unfit or incapable by those who direct the greater or the little Catechism, are the only ones to be admitted to the week-day Catechism.

To admit younger children, those who ought not to make their Communion for two years,—on the pretence that thus their preparation will be longer,—is a very great mistake; it is to destroy at one blow, both for the present and the future, not only all the *prestige* and all the power, but the very meaning of the week-day Catechism. I must expressly request of you, gentlemen, that this may never be done.

The list of the children to be admitted is solemnly read out at the Catechism, the Sunday before the opening of the week-day Catechism, or it may be given out at the *Prône*, before all the parish. All the fathers, as well as all the mothers, ought to be specially invited. This proclamation, eagerly looked forward to by the children, gives great pleasure to all those who are admitted, and to their parents, if it is done properly.

And as to those who are not admitted, the Curé should express to them his regret, and tell them also his weighty reasons; he will give both to them and their parents all the advice and encouragement they need for the future; and at the same time he will tell the children who are received all the new duties which their admission imposes on them; they ought henceforth to be models for the parish, and the comfort of their own families; models of punctuality at the Catechism, of zeal in learning their religion, of regularity at the holy Offices, &c., &c.

I remember still, gentlemen, it is one of my brightest recollections, the deep impression made and the emotion of all, parents and children, on that day.

2. It is the custom, gentlemen, to bring the boys and girls together, for the week-day Catechism. S. François de Sales certainly saw no inconvenience in it, for it was his own practice, and he enjoined it on others. M. Borderies did the same, for many long years, at S. Thomas Aquinas, in very difficult times, and he has often told me that he never found any inconvenience from it.

I may add that my constant experience is quite the same as that of M. Borderies. It is almost universally done in Paris, and moreover it is a necessity in the country; otherwise the Curé, who is single-handed, would have to do and repeat twice over what he can do and say quite as well, or even much better, all in one. I say much better, for in fact this bringing both together, if it is properly managed, has not only no inconvenience, but has very real advantages; for singing the hymns, for instruction, for emulation, and even for the growth of piety. A Curé, or a Catechist, besides, concentrates on the one thing all his zeal, all his anxiety, all his efforts; he puts the whole interest of his ministry into it, and he finds his interest in it. I will even go so far as to say that if a week-day Catechism is only composed of little girls, the language of the Catechist may come to be somewhat weak, almost effeminate; and if it is only composed of little boys, it may, on the contrary sometimes degenerate into language somewhat wanting in tenderness. Personal piety may be lacking among the boys, strength with the girls. The simultaneous attendance of boys and girls gives the right character to the Catechism, and it gives the right tone and accent and interest to the language of the Catechist.

To be convinced of this you need only have had the experience. A priest of this diocese, in one of our most important towns, having for the first time brought together boys and girls at the week-day Catechism, although the custom had been otherwise, and there were prejudices against it, wrote to me lately as follows:

"Our week-day Catechisms flourish. The prejudices which the parents, the teachers, and the children entertained against this new and unknown method, particularly as to the little girls and boys being together, have entirely disappeared. Every one now wishes them well, and they are zealous and interested about it. To see these children for two hours so attentive and so absorbed, you might think them already in retreat.

"A lady, the mistress of a school, very clever but very prejudiced on this matter, said to me the other day: 'I am astonished at the simplicity and the easy way in which these children behave at these meetings, they are not thinking of each other . . . it is a subject of joy and amazement to me to see their interest. . . I reproach myself greatly with having doubted for a moment the success of this method, and the experience. . .'"

3. Except the reading, and commenting on the Life of Decalogne, or some other pious child,—for the purpose of deepening and illustrating the Instructions in a bright and touching form,—all the parts of the week-day Catechism succeed each other as in all other Catechisms; as given below.

But everything in it is done to act strongly on the soul.

1. PRAYER: It should be said with very special reverence. The children must not be allowed to hurry, nor to say it with a loud or coarse voice. A few very grave words of advice should always precede it, and sometimes follow it.

2. A HYMN for the opening, well selected.

3. THE REPETITION OF THE CATECHISM: It ought to be entirely learnt afresh for the examinations which precede the first Communion; and the recitation should be always absolutely perfect.

4. THE "BONS POINTS": During the questioning, familiar explanations on the principal Articles of the Creed; this is what is called the *jeu de bons points*. Nothing is of more importance at the week-day Catechism; for if this exercise is well done, it can be looked to more than anything else for planting the faith, for illustrating it, and for confirming it in the souls of the children.

5. THE REPORT ON THE ANALYSES: This report ought to be vigorous and animated, pleasant, and at the same time serious; and made impressive.

6. HOLY MASS: During the Mass the most complete attention must be required from the children; the hymns, at the beginning and end of the Mass, must be sung gravely, softly, reverently, without hurry; but naturally, and not dragging.

7. A HYMN relating to the subject of the Instruction.

8. THE INSTRUCTION, followed by another hymn.

9. The Exhortation, or reading, with comment, the life of Decalogne, or some other pious child.

10. The Admonitions: Always very serious, and very impressive.

11. Prayer: In conclusion, always with great devotion.

These, gentlemen, are the various parts of the week-day Catechism; I need only make some observations on three of the principal ones, the Instruction, holy Mass, and the life of Decalogne.

This will be the subject of our next discourse.

FIFTH DISCOURSE.

THE PRINCIPAL EXERCISES OF THE WEEK-DAY CATECHISM.

I.

And first, the Instruction. During the course of the week-day Catechism, gentlemen, the children ought to go over again the whole ground of the faith, they ought to be in a condition to answer well at the examinations on the whole of the diocesan Catechism; the letter and the meaning.

The letter, as I have said, must be known quite perfectly.

As to the meaning, all *Dogma* ought to be gone through again in the "*bons points.*"

The *Sacraments*, in the Instructions properly so called.

And *Morals*, in an impressive and practical manner, in the Admonitions, the hymns, the exercises of piety, &c.

I said *Dogma* in the "*bons points.*" Will you make note of this, gentlemen, for it is very important. The actual Instructions, which are given on the Sacraments, although dogmatic, are more particularly exhortative. There must be besides a solid and complete exposition of dogma, and of all the Christian mysteries; and this is done in that plan of "*bons points*" which has so great an attraction for the children.

Thus, the perfections of God, Creation, Providence, the spiritual and immortal nature of the soul, the last ends, Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell; the history of Religion before our Lord Jesus Christ, the history of the Miracles of our Lord, the Trinity, the Incarnation, Redemption, the Church, its notes or special marks, its authority and its constant war in the world; all this must be taught, and taught thoroughly to the children, in the *bons points.*

And why all this teaching, gentlemen? Because your work needs a foundation, it needs firm ground on which everything can be fixed and built up. This firm ground, this basis, is the faith, a faith securely founded by solid teaching. And therefore, throughout the two or three months of the week-day Catechism, there should always be a special Instruction on dogmatic truths.

I press this point, gentlemen, because it is fundamental. If you only produce impressions on the children, you are doing nothing, you are tracing on shifting sand which the wind carries away; you must give conviction, the faith must rest on the solid rock of serious Instruction, a living and enlightened, a deep and solid faith.

We live in times of scepticism and unbelief, in which a simple unquestioning faith is no longer sufficient, either for rich or poor, for grown men, nor even for children; philosophers abound in the villages as well as in the towns, teachers of unbelief are everywhere. It is necessary, then, I repeat, to ground the faith in the children's soul, and at the same time to make them see how contemptible, how foolish, how miserable is unbelief. And all this, not at all by controversy, but by the simple, clear, noble, enlightened exposition of the truths of the faith, by the teaching of authority, after the example of the Saviour who taught "*Tanquam potestatem habens.*"

It is the very rarest quality in a Catechist to know how to instruct. By Instruction the faith, already planted in the child's soul in holy Baptism, is developed, enlightened, strengthened; it is then, as our Lord says, founded not on the sand, but on the rock, and the winds may blow and the waves roar; it will stand all these tempests. When I know that the greater number of the young people, of both sexes, of our Catechisms of S. Hyacinthe, have persevered, that at this present time they are faithful Christians, several even bringing honour and support to religion; it is to the "*bons points,*" to the solid dogmatic Instructions which they received at the Catechism, it is to their *enlightened* faith that I chiefly attribute it.

Together with this, the Instructions on Grace, on Prayer

and the Sacraments, particularly on those of Penance and the Eucharist, should both instruct them and also inspire them with those sentiments of piety and the love of God, which are necessary for their first Communion. There the Admonitions of the Head Catechist will teach and inculcate upon them all the great duties of Christian morality, the commandments of God and of the Church; and if all this is done, and done well, we may rest assured that the children are solidly instructed in their religion.

2. I ought to say something to you also, gentlemen, on *holy Mass* at the week-day Catechism.

From time to time at least, if not at every meeting, it is indispensable. M. Borderies used to have it always, and he has often said to me, "It was everything for me." And in fact, for any one who understands the principles of Christianity, the holy Mass includes the whole of Christianity. Dogma, worship, and morals are there wonderfully combined, and M. Borderies so well understood this, that in order to bring the holy Mass, with all its sublimity and all its depth, within the comprehension of children he wrote expressly for them *Prayers for the Mass*, which express in the most simple but most living and touching way, all the dogmatic, the liturgical, and the moral truths which he desired to impress on their souls; and it was these same prayers, explained and commented on by him, which the children always said at the week-day Catechism. And M. Borderies has often told me that it was really at Mass that the decisive moment came for the conversion of his children, both because of the immense grace of the holy Sacrifice, and also by the impression, which is all its own, of this, the greatest of all religious acts, and that which most awakens Christian feelings in the soul.

For my own part, gentlemen, I think it of such great importance that the holy Mass should be celebrated from time to time at the week-day Catechism, that in parishes where for this purpose it will be necessary to change the hour of Mass, at the risk of some persons missing it, I do not hesitate to say, do not let that hinder you; there are more advantages in the children preparing for their first Communion, being

able to attend holy Mass, than there are disadvantages in now and then depriving some devout souls of it.

But if, as we have just said, the whole of religion, the Incarnation, Redemption, all our highest Mysteries are included in the holy Sacrament of the Altar; if there are brought into practice the highest religious acts, adoration, prayer, gratitude towards God, thanksgiving, atonement for sins; how important it is that the children should be made to understand all this, that they should be given the habit of assisting at holy Mass with great faith and real devotion. And now, gentlemen, I add that at the week-day Catechism nothing is easier to do.

For this purpose the Mass must always be preceded by a short but effective exhortation, or rather by an instructive and touching *Admonition;* and by means of these Admonitions, given well and in detail, making them understand that the holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the same as the holy Sacrifice of the Cross, that our Lord present on the Altar of the holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the same Whom they will receive into their own heart on the day of their first Communion, that there they must give up their sins and ask pardon of them from God, &c.; it is not difficult by this means to bring them on gradually to assist at the holy Mass with intelligence and faith; in the time of Holy Week with compunction and repentance, and as the time for first Communion approaches, with joy. And remember, gentlemen, it is not only that in this way you will convert them, but nothing will so ensure their perseverance in the practice of their religious duties in the future, because the holy Mass is not only the greatest act of Christian worship, but also the most necessary practice in all religion, that which your children should always observe, thus hallowing the Sunday. To have taught them how to hear Mass, is to have done much, nearly everything towards bringing them to Church later on.

I know, gentlemen, several among you who have successfully adopted the practice of always having the Mass at the Catechism; I am much touched by this zeal, and I think it will be useful to give to all the benefit of this experience and

this good example. I know even of Curés of mere villages, where there is no *vicaire*, who are quite alone, and yet are able to accomplish it. But how, you will say, in these parishes, how can the children be watched over during the time? These good Curés have provided for this; they have been able to make devout people in the parish interested in the Catechism; they come to this Mass, and make it their business to attend to the children.

I sent, gentlemen, the following questions to one of them:

"While you are saying Mass for the children of the Catechism, who is taking care of them?"

"Who attends to their singing?"

The answer was as follows:

"No doubt the children cannot be perfectly watched over, while I am saying Mass. I have the boys, however, in sight below the Altar, in the choir, and they behave very well. This no doubt is because of their nearness to me, and still more because they are occupied in saying their *chapelet* and singing hymns. The fact is that perhaps only once in a month have I to find any fault.

"The girls are outside the choir, they sing the hymns alternately with the boys. My sister and other persons who come to this Mass are there to watch over them, if need be, and to support the singing. There are always some who sing fairly well; these begin and lead the others. This has succeeded perfectly. The singing of the hymns thus becomes general. Beginning with the best known tunes, and occasionally teaching them others, we succeed in forming a nice little collection."

Another of your brethren has recourse to the following plan:

"From time to time, for a refreshment, hymns are sung at the Catechism of first Communion; but those who cannot read must be taught the words of the *refrain* by heart.

"It is above all during the Mass, at which all are present, that the singing of the hymns is taken up with fresh ardour.

"This is the way we proceed: one of the children says the prayer at the beginning, and then the whole time of the Mass is divided between reciting the prayers of the *chapelet*, and singing the hymns. Part of the *chapelet* is said, then the boys sing a verse, and every one joins in the *refrain*. The girls sing another verse, then the *refrain* for all; then the second portion of the *chapelet* is recited. Always at the end of the Mass, the Psalm *Laudate* is sung, and sometimes the *O Salutaris* after the Consecration.

"I know nothing which has succeeded better than this new method of hearing Mass, as practised by these poor little children, who never get weary for a single instant for the whole time the Mass lasts, but keep always quiet and attentive."

You see, gentlemen, here, as elsewhere, zeal is able to accomplish all things; believe me it is not often that means are wanting to zeal, but zeal is sometimes wanting to the means.

I will add nothing to these interesting and instructive details, except that instead of the *chapelet*, I would gladly substitute the prayers for the Mass, which bring before the children so well the principle of the holy Sacrifice, its object, its great characteristics, and its fruits.

A devout person, perhaps the master or mistress, or the steadiest and most advanced of the children, could recite these prayers aloud, while the others listened to them, or followed them in their books.

I should wish also that the hymns sung during the holy Mass should be upon the holy Sacrifice itself, and thus help to instruct the children as well as to touch their hearts.

3. *The Life of Decalogne*, gentlemen, or some other pious child, is yet another help, a very admirable resource. For the country one could have another book, *Theodule*, for instance, or *The Devout Peasant*, or another which contains the story of a brother and sister preparing for their first Communion.

This reading may well take the place of the Homily. It is not that I object to the Homily at the week-day Catechism, I would not in any way lay down the law; on the contrary I see that the different Gospels adapt themselves admirably to the first Communion, and furnish attractive and deep lessons; but the Homily, which is an Instruction taking the form of exhortation, is here less necessary, because all the Instructions of the week-day Catechisms are in a manner Homilies. at least they always conclude with an earnest exhortation. The readings have more interest. In the first place they have the charm of a story, which has such power with children; and moreover it is the story of a child, of a child of their own age, and

in the same position as themselves; of a child like themselves, having the same faults, the same dispositions; quick, impetuous, passionate, and yet being changed, converted; a child who dies young, at their own age; and finally it is the life of a child unfolding itself before them with an ever growing interest, it holds them in suspense, they long to know the end; and this lasts two months.

For another reason also these readings strike the children more, because they are examples, and example, as you know, gentlemen, is very much stronger than direct precept: "*exempla plus valent quàm præcepta, et exhortationes.*" These examples give occasion naturally to a number of lessons directly applicable to the children, but they come in unexpectedly and suddenly, like a flash. Sometimes it is only a momentary reflection, a word thrown out in passing; the reading goes on as before, but a mark has been left on the soul.

I may add that these readings are less fatiguing than a direct exhortation, and that they come in admirably at the end of the Catechism as a rest to the children, who perhaps need it a little, gentlemen, for the meetings of the week-day Catechism generally last two hours without the Mass, two hours and a half with the Mass; two hours and a half, during which the children have been quite still and attentive in their places. I shall never forget the expression of all these little faces, their sudden satisfaction as I took in my hand the book containing the life of Decalogne; the children all seemed to revive; their eyes brightened up again; arms crossed, hands joined, immediately, and they listened with such attention and pleasure that it was a real happiness to read to them. The children were so fond of it, that Decalogne became to them like a brother, and when I came to his death, they were all in tears. They parted from him sorrowfully, as from a friend, and all, those at least who could, hastened to buy his life to read it over again.

But these readings must be arranged with a certain skill; it is well to change the order of the book, and take it so as to be in harmony with the different periods and events of the Catechism; it is, moreover, quite easy to do so, the way is

clear. Thus the first details upon his birth and infancy, the description of his faults, and of his defects, make him in the first place known to the children; then they come to the beginning of his conversion, they follow all the details; then comes his general Confession, then his beautiful letter to his sister; then his first Communion; after that they hear of all his goodness, and finally his death. You can easily see, gentlemen, how the reading of all this may be both pleasant and profitable for a Catechism.

4. But to keep up and give life to all this, a *Rule*, to be read and explained to the children at the first meetings, is indispensable. To give you a clear and definite idea of this, gentlemen, I think it may be useful to set before you a detailed *Rule* of the week-day Catechism; it is the rule of my own Catechism, and is as we practised it at the Madeleine, in the Chapel of S. Hyacinthe. It is true, this Rule of a particular Catechism must necessarily be modified in some points according to local circumstances; but I prefer to give you this *living* Rule, so to speak, rather than another which might be more generally applicable, but which has never been used. I will add the sort of commentary by which we enlarged on it, and explained it, which gave some sort of life to the dead letter; you will see too the tone we adopted in speaking to the children.

RULE OF THE WEEK-DAY CATECHISM.

1. The children of the week-day Catechism will all leave their homes punctually, and with a quiet earnestness of purpose, at a quarter past ten, so as to be at the Church by half-past ten, every Tuesday and Friday.

Insist much on this punctuality and on the time. . . Make several children repeat it. . . Is it at ten? Is it at eleven?

Tell them that every year children have been sent away for this. . . We shall be quite strict . . . to come a minute late . . . after the prayer, is a half-absence.

You will be told beforehand if there is any change in the day or hour; but that will scarcely ever happen.

Quietness on the road . . . go over your lesson . . . think of God, of your first Communion . . . let every one be edified by your behaviour. Particularly as you come into the Church, be quite collected; as you come into the porch, remember you are going into the house of God.

2. The boys will go at once to the Church, and take the places

which will be shown to them. The other children will go at once to the Chapel of S. Hyacinthe, and take their places there.

3. All the children on coming into the Church or the Chapel will remember that they are in the house of God. Their first duty will be to kneel down to adore the Blessed Sacrament, and to make a short prayer to the Blessed Virgin; then, till the opening of the Catechism, they will employ their time in going over their Catechism in a whisper, or saying their *chapelet*.

No child must talk, or laugh, or be giddy in any way; and it is forbidden to move about in the Church.

This point is of great importance, my children. It has to do with the virtue of Reverence . . . so rare at your age, because you are very giddy. . . My children, take care . . . there will be twenty among you who will have to be sent away for breaking this article of the Rule . . . I am sure of it. . .

To kneel down, says the Rule; there are some who do not know how to kneel down . . . they come into the house of God like plough-boys. . .

This may seem to you a strong expression, gentlemen, particularly for such a Catechism as that of which I am speaking, nevertheless it was used. I went on:

You must behave perfectly, and observe the very greatest reverence in the presence of God, so that the faithful may be edified. . . Would it not be a scandal for children . . . preparing for their first Communion, to be wanting in reverence for the holy place, and towards our divine Saviour, and even at the foot of the Altar? Woe to the careless child whom we should find laughing, running, talking, or walking about the Church. . . We shall put one of you in charge to keep watch in our absence . . . and we shall come ourselves when you are not expecting us. . .

4. Directly one of the Catechists has given the signal for leaving the Church to go to the Chapel of the Catechism, the children will kneel down, not pushing, not upsetting the chairs; they will say a short prayer to the Blessed Sacrament, and rising all together at the given signal, they will immediately begin to walk, two and two, in silence, saying over again their Catechism to themselves, and come into the Chapel . . . taking their places, without getting on the benches.

Attention and silence on coming in to the Catechism. . . It is a most important point . . . the reverent attention of the whole time depends on it. . .

5. Throughout the Catechism all the children are to conduct themselves with perfect quietness and modesty, not to talk, nor laugh, nor even to turn their head.

All through the Catechism, at least unless they are looking over their lesson or taking notes, they are to have their arms crossed or

their hands joined, and never to look at anything but the crucifix, or the picture of the Blessed Virgin, or the Catechist who is speaking.

This is a very important point . . . steadiness, quietness, attention. . . You are only admitted on this condition . . . if you do not mean to be steady . . . tell us so, and do not come again. There are children who are always looking about . . . no one can open the door . . . or ask a question of any of your companions . . . without all the heads looking up at once to see what is passing . . . take care . . . we shall be quite strict . . . warn your parents . . . you will be sent away for that one thing only . . . because you are not preparing for your first Communion when you are looking about, with wandering eyes and idle looks. Arms crossed, or hands joined . . . that is to be always your attitude. . .

6. No one must lounge against the benches during Prayer.

Tell us if you want cushions. . . Does a child who wants to ask his mother for something begin his request by lounging on a chair?

7. Every one must be exact in getting up, sitting, or kneeling, at the moment the signal is given.

This is all necessary for good order . . . you understand it. . .

8. The letter of the Catechism must be perfectly learnt. Directly a child is called, he will rise, make the sign of the cross, speaking aloud and intelligibly, and will answer without hurry, clearly and distinctly.

He will receive a good or bad number according as he has answered well or ill.

Here again is a very important point . . . here also we shall be quite strict . . . idle children cannot hope to make their first Communion. . . Now it is only idle ones who cannot learn some questions of the Catechism . . . one page or two. . . You have already learnt it, you have only to learn it quite perfectly . . . at the Sunday Catechism it might sometimes be passed over; but here, never . . . a child who answers wrongly will be asked four times in succession, and if he does not answer perfectly, he will be sent away. . . If you have had any real reason, make your excuse, and at least avoid the scandal. . .

9. All the children will listen to the Instruction in perfect silence. They will take notes from which to make the Analyses.

I can answer for a good first Communion for a child who always makes his Analyses. . . Occasionally the best will be read aloud . . . to all will be given the seals which they deserve . . . the practical resolutions in particular, will be read out . . . the little earnest prayers which children sometimes make . . . but without mentioning any names, for fear of spoiling their modesty. . . Last year we had many comforts of this kind. . .

10. Rewards and punishments.

Good marks, images, and books[1] will be given to children who

[1] It is a very good thing to give well-chosen little books as a reward. One of the best is the *Pensez-y-bien*, of which it has been said that it has made

have been very well-behaved, or who have been noticed for their diligence and their knowledge.

At the week-day Catechism are given :

(*a*) Good marks for good conduct, good recitations, good answers. Three of these good marks are worth a picture.

(*b*) Seals impressed on the Analyses ; and there are special seals for this in the week-day Catechism.

(*c*) Prizes and *accessits;* for steadiness ; for Analyses ; for knowledge.

(*d*) *Cachets* of first Communion and of Confirmation, which will be distributed solemnly at the first festival of the Catechism of Perseverance after the first Communion.

Do not be afraid . . . we shall be lavish in rewards for the good and attentive children. . . We shall soon have a little fête . . . where we shall be able, I hope, to have a grand distribution of pictures.

But also, these gentlemen will be walking about in the Chapel . . . and why? . . . Do they come here to walk about? Yes, they will walk about, they will go in and out amongst you, and without saying anything (till the end of the meeting, when they will be announced) . . . they will make notes of any idle or disobedient children.

If a child has two of these notes against him, he will be sent away. . . I shall say to him : my child, I am very sorry for it ; but I see that you are not yet sufficiently prepared . . . you would not wish to make a bad first Communion, would you? . . . we will wait for next year.

My children, you should make it a point of honour, that this Catechism of first Communion, for the first time, should be gone through without any one deserving to be sent away. . . What an honour for you! What a comfort to us! . . .

But would it not be possible to have one of these notes effaced, and to have a good one? Yes, you have only to be remarked for your regularity in coming to the Catechism, for knowing your lessons . . . for your attention, your steadiness, and above all, for your piety. . .

11. At the week-day Catechism there are dignitaries, namely : an *Intendant*, one each, for the boys and girls, and one or more Assistants, for each. The Head Catechist will name them at the beginning of the Catechism.

Their chief functions will be to collect the Analyses, the certificates of Confession, &c. They will occupy places of honour.

But they will be employed as little as possible, for fear of distracting them.

12. All the children, before they come, must remember that no one will ever go out from the Catechism before the end.

Otherwise, great abuses would follow. . . If however there should be. some very special reason, the Head Catechist could give permission . .

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more conversions than there are letters in it ; a book to be had so cheaply that it can be given away in the poorest parishes. You should try to secure that, by the end of the Catechism, every one has a copy of it. It is an excellent book for giving them the habit of making a little meditation on what they read, as is also the *Imitation*, or the *Journée du Chrétien*.

but never, under any pretext, to two children at once; and it must always be while the hymns are being sung.

13. A child is liable to be excluded from the Catechism after three absences, or even two, without an excuse given.

If need be, a call will be made at the end of each Catechism, to make sure of those who are present or absent.

When unavoidable circumstances have obliged any to come late, or to be absent, an excuse in writing must be sent.

As to the children who for some real reason could not come till after the questioning . . . they will be questioned afterwards.

The week-day Catechism does not dispense from the Sunday Catechism. The absences of both count, and lead to exclusion.

14. All the children, as soon as possible, will bring their certificates of baptism.

Every year some are sent away on this account . . . bring them at once.

15. All the children will make their confession every fortnight, and when they have begun their general Confession, every week, until the first Communion.

You understand, this is indispensable. A child who should let a month pass without making his Confession would be liable to be sent away. . .

Give your certificates of Baptism, and those of Confession, the boys to M——, and the children on this side to M——.

16. As soon as we make the signal to the children, they will go away at once, the boys in particular, going straight home, without even stopping at the Church to make any short prayer.

Only the children on this side will be allowed to go into the Church for a few moments, to adore the Blessed Sacrament.

You may think this strange . . . perhaps the boys will regret it. . . Well, as it is more easy for you to come away from your homes, you can make up for it in the course of the day, and make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. . .

You understand too . . . if you are not allowed to stop in the Church . . . still less are you allowed to stop outside or in the streets, to talk or play with the others. Any child who should be seen doing so, would be sent away at once. You wonder at this severity; we believe you to be all good children, but one or two naughty ones must not be allowed to spoil all the rest . . . and as there is no outward mark by which we can always know, make no acquaintance without your parents' consent.

And we shall be very watchful on this point, woe to the child who should be caught . . . we are resolved to make an example. . .

And this must be kept to. You would hardly believe the evils which arise from the children staying about and playing in the streets after the Catechism.

17. Behaviour when not at the Catechism:

Every child who either in public or at home allows himself to

commit serious faults, disobedience, lying, quarrelling . . . who behaves badly in going to the church, will be liable to be sent away.

To make your first Communion you must be without reproach; the angels themselves are not pure enough. . .

Take good care, we have the secret of knowing all. . . You will sometimes be inclined to think that we have correspondence with your good angel.

You will be very much astonished, when you find that I know certain things. . .

But above all, once again, if a child is found playing outside, or under the porch . . . with the bad people about . . . we should be inflexible. . . Remember it would be conduct unworthy of a child well-born . . . much more of a Christian child. . . You would expose yourself to be mixed up with tramps, little thieves, people whom the police take up . . . who are sent away to the colonies . . . or to prison.

But no . . . you will go home quietly, turning over in your heart the good instructions and the gracious words you have listened to at the Catechism. . . Any one meeting you in the streets should be able to see that you are children belonging to the week-day Catechism; they should be able to say: what lovable children, how quiet and good! one can plainly see they are preparing for their first Communion. . .

And now the Rule is ended. . . To be happy here, and contented, and blest by God, you know what you have to do . . . do it. . .

Such, gentlemen, was the Rule, and very nearly my exact commentary upon it. I ought to add that if the solemnity of its announcement was great, very much greater was the severity with which I watched that it was kept. I was inflexible, and I may say that during the Catechism, which lasted nearly three months, it happened hardly three or four times that a child, for instance, was late, or came a minute after the hour, or said one word to his neighbour.

5. But all this, gentlemen, only concerns the children, and brings me now naturally to say a few words concerning the Catechists. Although I have already said much on this head in the first part of these discourses, yet there are still some special and very important observations to be made.

I will say first of all: Everything I have said to you hitherto on the excellence and supreme efficacy of this fundamental ministry of catechising, applies to this Catechism with yet greater force.

For this is an exceptional Catechism; it is, so to speak, the central point of the whole work which has to be accomplished.

For now everything becomes greater, higher; everything takes new proportions, there is a singular dignity and gravity about everything; the great object, which is always kept in

view, communicates to everything, to the sacred hymns, to the holy Word, to the smallest exercises, a something which is more than ever powerful, deep, divine.

It is the supreme effort of pastoral zeal, and also of the grace of God, working on these young souls.

And thus the heart of the Catechist is altogether absorbed and penetrated by it, as at no other time.

And if he were not, if a Priest felt nothing out of the common, no ardour of apostolic fire, he must be pitied; I even say decidedly, let him retire, he is not the man for this ministry.

You, gentlemen, who from the beginning of these discourses have been meditating so seriously on the work of Catechisms, you must not be surprised that for this one I demand of a Catechist zeal, and quite special efforts of zeal.

I ought to add that the importance of the week-day Catechism is such, that although there are necessarily fewer children there than at the Catechisms of Perseverance, yet to every week-day Catechism there should be several Catechists.

In villages where there is only one priest, he must at least get some help from the school-master or mistress, or some other good woman.

Then different Catechists share in the work of the Catechism, much in the same way as in the Catechisms of Perseverance. The Head Catechist presides, directs everything, conducts the *jeu de bons points*, gives the *Admonitions*, and reads the life of Decalogne. One of the Catechists sees to the placing of the children; another keeps an exact account of the tickets of Confession, the certificate of Baptism, the Analyses, &c.

These gentlemen also divide the questioning and the Instructions to be given, and also the correction of the Analyses.

The Head, who has always to give the Admonitions, which are so important, especially in the week-day Catechism, might give fewer Instructions; he ought perhaps to reserve for himself that upon sacrilegious Communion.

It is needless to say that the most perfect cordiality and unity should exist among the Catechists. When saying their

Mass, their breviary, their *chapelet*, they ought to pray much for these children who are confided to them, who are so dear to the heart of God, and they should plan together on the means to adopt for securing the success of their work, and for bringing about, God helping them, the conversion and the salvation of every child.

The *Councils*, so necessary after every Catechism, are particularly so after the week-day Catechism ; the Head Catechist must arrange that they shall never be missed. For my own part, I have never understood how the work of a Catechism can be well conducted, if every meeting is not followed by a Council, in which every one gives his opinion on the way things have been done, and this Council thus serves as a preparation for the next meeting. The advantages of this mutual and immediate control are invaluable. The following is the order of what is treated of in these Councils :

1. The Head Catechist begins by emptying his portfolio, and giving out to each of the others the papers with which he is concerned, the affairs he has the charge of.

2. Then the *punctuality* of the Catechists is inquired into : Did they come in time ? Did they begin at the exact time, without a moment's delay ?

3. *The regularity and punctuality of the children :* Who have been absent ? The Head Catechist sees that the parents are written to immediately, that he may know the reason. Not a moment should ever be lost about this.

4. *The Questioning :* How did the Catechist do his part ? How did the children answer ?

5. *The behaviour of the children :* Constant watchfulness of the Catechists ; to read one's breviary instead of watching is absolutely inadmissible.

6. *Devotion :* Prayers, holy Mass, Admonitions of piety. How have the children taken all this ? Were these Admonitions well given ?

7. *The "bons points" :* This difficult exercise ; how was it done ?

8. *Observations* on the children ; the *good*, the *doubtful*, the *naughty ;* to know them well, follow them up well ; marks for good conduct.

9. To *finish* everything and the whole at the precise *time ;* very important for the well-being of the Catechism, and it gives satisfaction to the parents.

10. *Observations* on the Instructions and the Admonitions ; kind and charitable criticism, but severe and complete ; rigorous veracity ; nothing so trains Catechists.

11. *The Hymns* well started; sustained. . . Has every Catechist joined?

12. *The Analyses:* Are they zealously kept up?—quality, quantity.

13. *Departure:* This is the last, and not the least important of the exercises. How has it been watched over, how done?

14. Arrange the next meetings.

Those who have their work at heart, gentlemen, and sincerely desire the success of their ministry, are not afraid of entering on all this labour; they treat the Catechism seriously and gravely; and they treat each other as brothers, with cordiality, pleasantness, and profit.

I will speak to you next time on the great *epochs* of the week-day Catechism. It is of very great interest.

SIXTH DISCOURSE.

THE GREAT EPOCHS AND EVENTS OF THE WEEK-DAY CATECHISM.

I HAVE to discourse to you to-day on the three distinct and progressive periods into which the week-day Catechism is divided; all the life and action of this Catechism, all the success one may expect from it, all the good it can effect, depends on this.

The object, gentlemen, is so great, and in its wideness and entirety so complex, that it must so to speak be divided, in order to attain to it step by step, as by a sort of skilful and practised strategy. Each of these three great epochs of the week-day Catechism corresponds to the three most solemn stages of the work of God in these young souls. Each has its own special and definite object, to which everything is to be directed, on which every effort must be concentrated; Hymns, Instructions, Admonitions, stories, readings; and over all hovers always the great image of the first Communion, which is the supreme object of the whole work, the holy and powerful motive for all zeal, the crown of the whole.

The object and proper work of each of these three epochs is as follows:

The first brings the child out of his usual light and frivolous life, and makes him enter on a serious preparation for the first Communion by prayer, by religious work, and by Christian emulation. It lasts from a fortnight to three weeks.

The second period continues the work of the first, but goes further; it trains the child in the spirit of penitence, and

includes the immediate preparation for his general Confession. This period lasts nearly a month.

The third, still continuing the work of the two former, adds to it the immediate preparation for the first Communion. It lasts another month.

The retreat of three days finishes the work, which is already well advanced, and strikes the final blows.

Finally, the great day of the first Communion crowns the whole; it is the consummation of the divine work.

And moreover, gentlemen, in these three great epochs of the week-day Catechism, which correspond, as I have just said, to the three most solemn stages of the work of grace in the return of the soul to God; there are, as it were, salient points, which attract attention; there are events which gather up in a special way the influence which we are trying to bring to bear on the children, the special object we are seeking to attain; these *events*,—for they may be so called, and they are great events for the children, I can answer for it, if well conducted,—are, in the first epoch, the *Consecration* of the Catechism to *the Blessed Virgin;* then the two *Examinations*, one in the second epoch, the other in the third; and the *Act of Contrition*, and the commencement of the *general Confession*, between the two examinations.

This is not all, gentlemen; each meeting even should have a meaning, a special object, and should produce a definite impression; and everything should be so combined that this impression shall be vivid, deep, and as far as possible, indelible. All these meetings, though distinct from one another, yet holding together, linked together, the one prepares for the next, and thus an uninterrupted force is obtained. The result is that the children never once go out from the Catechism without their soul having been deeply stirred, and in the end the grace of God holds them in complete possession.

It is for the very purpose of attaining this result that the Instructions, as I have said, ought to be very different from those of other Catechisms; they are much more in the form of exhortation; they aim chiefly at lifting up souls, touching them, and converting them.

Let us, gentlemen, go into detail, and try to go deeply into the spirit of each period, and the meaning of each of its *events;* thus only shall we thoroughly understand what the work is, and how it ought to be done.

I.

In the first period, then, the work is to prepare the children remotely, and in a general way. For this, what is needed? Two things:

First, to inspire them with a relish and a zeal for the week-day Catechism, then to make them understand well the greatness of the gift which the goodness of God prepares for them in the first Communion; in short, to strike them, to impress them strongly with this great thought, that the most serious affair of their life is now in hand. It should be able to be said at the end of this important period that they are really *possessed* by this thought.

Then they must be inspired with the love of prayer, with the desire of it, they must be brought really to pray to God.

And to obtain these very important results, very simple means have to be employed.

The great point with children, gentlemen, is to get at their soul by some real sentiment which penetrates and engrosses them; if it is only at first a human and quite natural sentiment, provided it is a good one, it matters not, it does not remain barren, it acts powerfully upon them. Then it has to be elevated, transformed, made supernatural.

Therefore, at the week-day Catechism, we begin by a sentiment which easily finds access to the heart of children, *emulation;* zeal concerning good repetition, the Analyses, the great seals, the rewards, the good marks for knowledge and good behaviour. In this way they are inspired with a great esteem, and a great ardour for their Catechism, its value is increased in their eyes; then, from an interest in, and love of their Catechism, we bring them on by degrees to love of the good God, to real piety; and the first step they must be taught to make on this new road, the first supernatural taste

one seeks to inspire them with, is the taste for prayer; prayer, which is the first initiation into Christian life, the first drawing near to God. To make the children pray, and pray well; with this, gentlemen, we must begin, with this we must end. If we have not inspired these poor children with the need, the love, the instinct of prayer, if we have not brought them to pray to God,—not at great length, but very really, and very seriously,—we have done nothing.

As I have said, hymns are a great help here. The hymns are real prayers. Only they must be sung devoutly. If they sing devoutly, if they pray, they are saved.

During the first period then, the *Admonitions* given to the children ought to turn: (1) On the necessity of showing, by their zeal for the Catechism, and for writing their Analyses, by their good behaviour in the Church and at home with their parents, that they understand what it is to be called to make their first Communion; that they feel the seriousness which such an action demands, and do not wish any longer to be giddy, foolish children . . . and (2) on the necessity for children who have such great need of the grace of God, to begin to pray to Him really and well.

And meanwhile, all the *Instructions* will turn upon grace, on the absolute need of it for them; upon prayer, on the way to pray rightly, on the characteristics and the power of prayer; upon the Sacraments in general, which are means of grace, on sin by which grace was lost, on Baptism by which it is recovered, on devotion to the Blessed Virgin, who helps so powerfully in obtaining grace.

Such, gentlemen, are the subjects treated of in this first period of the Catechism, not diffusely, nor yet dryly, in affectionate language, full of force and unction; and with continual reference to the first Communion, which should unceasingly be held up before them, and contemplated in the distance.

And it is by the very name of their first Communion that they are made to feel what misery it is for them to have offended God, to be separated from God and in a state of mortal sin; how this sad condition makes them unworthy to

approach the holy Table; what need they have of grace to lift them out of this state of sin! what need they have of prayer to obtain this grace!

And all the *Admonitions*, besides, of the Head Catechist being in harmony with these Instructions, and turning on the same thoughts, it all tends to inspire the children with the feeling of prayer, the desire of coming nearer to God, and partaking of His bounties.

And now, gentlemen, if you would know how one can arrive at making the children take their first steps; by what winning ways, what devices, what skilfulness, if I may so say, a pious and zealous Catechist succeeds in training their soul to pray, I can show it to you in the example of M. Borderies. You shall see, gentlemen, how this incomparable Catechist applied himself to make the children pray; we cannot study the great art of the Catechist at a better school.

Always, but above all, at the beginning of the week-day Catechism, he gave before each prayer, a serious and touching Admonition on the manner of saying it; he was not satisfied with this; in order to arouse the children yet more, he took care to point out to them each time, some special grace to pray for; yet more, he made himself as one of them, and they prayed together; he prayed for them, in their name, as one of themselves.

He went further still. He wrote prayers for them, had them printed, and distributed them. For instance, this one:

"The happy day is coming when for the first time I shall be permitted, O my divine Saviour, to take my place at Thy holy Table. I shall no longer envy the happiness of the children whom Thou dost admit to Thy sacred banquet, for after having nourished me, like them, with the milk of Thy Word, Thou art about to sustain me, like them, by the bread of the strong, in becoming Thyself the nourishment of my soul. Do Thou Thyself, I beseech Thee, prepare in my heart a dwelling worthy of Thee. . . "

He made them also in these prayers speak to God of their failings, their faults, and all the needs of their soul. And see, gentlemen, with what delicacy and yet with what strength:

"I am only a child, what canst Thou expect from me, with my giddiness, my indifference and my long ingratitude? Without doubt, Thou

willest to make Thy miracles of grace and power shine forth in me. . . Take captive then the frivolity of my mind, by penetrating it with the greatness of the benefit Thou art purposing to give me. In Thy mercy force it to forget the foolish things which distract it, that it may be filled with holy devotion at the thought of the ineffable gift Thou art reserving for me. . .

And this is not all. Becoming yet more practical, going into the most minute details, turning to account their childish tastes, M. Borderies advised the children to make little oratories in their homes. With this object he gave them little crucifixes and sacred images, and then he said, "I shall come and see them"; and he went, gentlemen. Then at the next Catechism, he would tell what he had seen. What follows are almost his exact words; and here we have, gentlemen, an example of what charming things zeal can devise, and it is also a model of an *Admonition* at the Catechism:

"There was," he said, "a child who never prayed to God, or who prayed very badly, quite without thought, not knowing what he was saying; it was with great difficulty, when the week-day Catechism began, that his mother got him to promise that he would never miss his morning and evening prayer . . . and he never had missed it, but it was so short, and he said it so fast, and so badly . . . that she was grieved.

"But since his conversion, he is quite changed as to all this. . . He finds pleasure in praying to God . . . he does it with thought . . . and his mother told me it was a sight which did her good to see him saying his prayers out of the *Journée du Chrétien*, with really touching devotion and fervour. . . After his morning prayers, he now has a few minutes reading in his *Pensez-y-bien*.

"He did not receive the *Pensez-y-bien* at the Catechism, but he asked his parents to buy him one, and also an *Imitation de Jésus Christ*. In an out-of-the-way place, he has made himself a little oratory. He has put there a crucifix, which had been for long lying forgotten in a corner, which he had never once looked at with any religious feeling. He has hung up all the sacred pictures which he had gained at the Catechism, a *chapelet* . . . all his devotional books are ranged round, his Analyses, &c. In this little oratory he says all his prayers . . . his penances. . . Every night too he uses his *chapelet* for about three minutes . . . and once he says the *Souvenez-vous* . . . then he reads for a little in the *Vie des Saints*. . . Thus ends his day.

"And I can answer for it that this child has become one of the best children at the Catechism, and that he will make an excellent first Communion."

Such were the holy devices employed by M. Borderies for giving the children a taste for prayer; there are others, gentlemen, and zeal will suggest them to any Catechist who has the heart to employ them. But I must draw your attention to one, which is used by one of yourselves in this diocese, and which seems to me truly excellent; it consists in composing litanies, containing the names of all the patron saints of the children; and having these litanies recited from time to time at the Catechism.[1]

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[1] The following is an example of these litanies:

PARISH OF SAINT-MARTIN D'OLIVET.

LITANIES OF THE PATRON SAINTS OF THE CHILDREN WHO ARE PREPARING FOR THEIR FIRST COMMUNION.

After the usual invocations:

S. Mary, Queen of Angels and of Saints, pray for us.
All holy guardian Angels,
S. Joseph,
S. Peter,
S. Paul,
All the holy Apostles,
S. Adolphe,
S. Amèle,
S. Clémentin,
S. Ernest,
S. Félix,
S. Saturnin,
S. Valentin,
All holy Martyrs and Confessors,
S. Aignan, patron Saint of the diocese of Orléans,
S. Alexandre,
S. Célestin,
S. Charles,
S. Désiré,
S. Edmond,
S. Martin, patron Saint of the parish of Olivet,
All holy Bishops and Priests,
S. Augustin,
S. Césaire,

Pray for us.

All the holy Doctors,
S. Antoine,
S. Maximin,
All the holy Hermits, Monks and Religious,
S. Eugénie,
S. Laurence,
S. Lucie,
S. Lucile,
S. Pauline,
S. Septimie,
S. Sophie,
All the holy Virgins and Martyrs,
S. Adèle,
S. Berthe,
S. Claire,
S. Clémence,
S. Macrine,
S. Odile,
S. Thérèse,
All the holy Virgins,
S. Adélaide,
S. Clotilde,
S. Elisabeth,
S. Marguerite,
All holy Wives and Widows,
All the Saints of God,

Pray for us.

Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, grant us pardon, Jesus.

Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, hear us, Jesus.

Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us, Jesus.

℣. Lord, hear our prayer.

℟. And let our cry come unto Thee.

You will understand that to hear one's baptismal name pronounced, and then to hear one's patron Saint invoked, has something in it which is pleasant to every child. And besides the story of each of the Saints who are invoked can be related to them one by one, or at least some striking fact in their life; this interests them, it leads them to imitate the Saints; and inspires them with a real confidence in their protection. In a Catechism which is not large, these litanies can be frequently said.

Further, gentlemen, all these efforts to bring the children to pray are wonderfully helped by an *event*, which takes place in this first period of the week-day Catechism, by a fête which has always a great charm for the children; it is *the fête of the solemn Consecration of the Catechism to the Blessed Virgin.* It takes place about the fourth or fifth meeting; it is easy to make it delightful.

The Altar of the Chapel should be decorated; above all, the image of the Blessed Virgin should be seen surrounded with lights and flowers.

After the prayer, the Head Catechist gives a well-prepared *Admonition* upon the festival.

Then follow all the ordinary exercises of the Catechism, but with this difference, that everything, hymns, questions, "*bons points*," Instruction, all is upon the Blessed Virgin. It is easy on this day to give a very effective Instruction, teaching the children the fundamental mystery of the Incarnation of our Lord, which is so closely linked with the divine Maternity in Mary; it can also be a very delightful Instruction and full of unction, such as may touch their heart deeply, showing Mary as Mother of men as well as Mother of God. There

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LET US PRAY.

O God, full of goodness and mercy, deign to look with compassion upon young children who desire to prepare themselves for making a good and holy first Communion. We beseech Thee, by the intercession of all our Patron Saints, to have pity upon us, to pardon our sins, to enlighten our minds with Thy Light, to inflame our souls with the fire of Thy divine love, and to grant us all necessary graces that we may receive into a pure heart Thy Divine Son, Whom we believe to be truly present in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Amen.

should always be a story concerning the Blessed Virgin on this day. And at the end of the Catechism, the two *Intendants*, of the boys and girls, kneel down at the entrance to the sanctuary, and in the name of the whole Catechism pronounce the act of Consecration.

I have always seen children charmed with this function; and when they leave they carry away real happiness in their soul, and a loving confidence in the Blessed Virgin.

It would be well, if the resources of the Catechism allow of it, to give to every child, on this day, an image of the Blessed Virgin with the prayer *Souvenez-vous*,—this touching, true and earnest prayer, which has converted so many sinners,—and even a pretty little medal, hung to a blue ribbon: the children come to the foot of the altar, kneel down, and the Curé passes the medal round the neck of each. It is easy to do this in the poorest parishes. This medal will never fail to remind them, together with the protection of Mary, of their first Communion which is drawing near.

This, to say the truth, is the only festival in the week-day Catechism. It is not, however, the only time in the Catechism when the children can find precious nourishment for their devotion; for in reality, this is the object of every meeting. And moreover the festival of the Compassion of the Blessed Virgin, and all Holy Week, are all precious holy-days, which we must know how to use for the children's profit. Such is the first period of the week-day Catechism.

II.

The second period is very much more serious still, and brings the children on a great step further; it introduces them into the spirit of Christian *penitence*, and in preparing them for a general Confession, it begins their *conversion*.

The first period was the time of emulation, and of the first beginnings of piety; everything seemed pleasant and attractive; the object was to win the heart of the children, and turn them gradually towards God. In the second period

they must be pushed further, the work of their conversion must be set about with energy; it is the penitent and austere time of the week-day Catechism; the words of the Catechist become more grave, stronger, more penetrating; *piercing*, as S. Paul says, even to the *dividing asunder the soul.* They search out there the sinful affections, the dangerous habits, the corrupt principles, so that everything which is impure and wicked may be rooted out. At this period of the Catechism, I have seen, gentlemen, most wonderful effects of the word of God and the grace of God upon the souls of these children, I have seen there the beginning of tears of sincere repentance, and generous love of God.

The Instructions then ought to turn upon sin and the Sacrament of Penitence; disobedience to God should be shown in all its hateful forms; rebellion, ingratitude, audacity, and folly; on the absolute necessity of conversion; on the indispensable need of contrition and firm purpose; on the qualities requisite for a good Confession; on absolution, and its wonderful effects.

All these subjects, gentlemen, allow of very striking expressions, of strong and pathetic language, and even the narrow limits within which one must confine oneself, the necessary conciseness and precision, far from taking away its effect, add to it. These Instructions must excite strong emotion, they must also give solid instruction; herein lies their difficulty, but also their value.

And throughout the time that these important Instructions are going on upon the Sacrament of Penitence, the Admonitions of the Head Catechist should turn upon the necessity of conversion, of asking pardon of God for one's faults, of renouncing all sin, and rooting out every bad habit; of having recourse with openness and courage to the means which God gives for our purification, at the tribunal of Penitence; also upon praying more than ever, asking for compunction of heart; on thorough self-examination, and finally on preparing oneself with all possible care for a general Confession. The hymns, the reading from the life of Decalogne, the special prayers which are said at the Catechism: all are on the same subject.

The language of the Head Catechist above all, which from the beginning of the week-day Catechism should be very loving, but very grave (a light and playful manner may sometimes be admitted in the other Catechisms, but never in a week-day Catechism), should become more impressive, more ardent, more austere. He must impress strongly the mind of the children, he must even frighten them, terrify them sometimes, he must make them feel how unworthy they are, in their present state, to make their first Communion; he must inspire them with a holy horror of themselves, a profound hatred of sin, and above all with the dread of making a bad general Confession for want of sincerity or repentance, and thus receiving a sacrilegious absolution.

Two great events besides, as I have said, mark this period; they are, the *first examination* at the beginning, and the *first Act of Contrition* towards the end.

Experience has shown the necessity of *two examinations* on the text and meaning of the Catechism, and also of *two Acts of Contrition.*

If we wait till a later time to prepare the children for their general Confession and for contrition, very serious difficulties may arise just at the time of the retreat. There must, therefore, be a first Act of Contrition, one month before the retreat, so that they may prepare well and begin well this general Confession; the second will be on the very eve of the first Communion.

On the other hand, one examination alone would be too wide, and would over-burden the children's memory, while the division of subjects into two examinations, helps them to learn better and to remember better. The first of these examinations takes place at the end of the first month, the other at the end of the second month.

But all this is arranged, not so much to help the children, by this division of subjects, to know their Catechism well, as because it gives two opportunities, instead of one, for producing great and strong impressions on their soul.

In fact, this examination, gentlemen, in the hands of a skilful Catechist, is a powerful force, which carries all before

it. Its influence is felt long beforehand, and lasts on till the last days of the Catechism. These dreaded examinations are given notice of at the beginning, and this dread hanging over the children's head can be allowed to weigh on them for a long time, and can be the stimulant to very great efforts; and as the admission, given after the examination, depends not only on the notes of the examination, but also on everything else which is required of them at the Catechism; good behaviour, devotion, good conduct elsewhere, whether in their families, or at their schools, the examination becomes a stimulant which urges and quickens them on all sides. Thus, for instance, if a child answers badly at the Catechism, we say to him, "But, my child, if you do not know such a short lesson, how will you be able to answer at the examination?" If a child has not been steady, "Ah, my child, we will keep you till the examination; we will have patience till then; but then we shall send you away, you may be very sure; if you go on in this way." Or again, I have known a mother, or a master of a school say, "But, sir, I cannot understand it; it is no use for my child to go to the week-day Catechism, he does not alter, he is still the same." And I have said, "Have patience; in a fortnight we shall have the examination, and then if your child is unchanged, if he does not obey you, if he is still impertinent, headstrong, wilful, he will not make his first Communion, we shall send him away." Or again, "I shall ask for a report of you, my child, from your parents and from your masters, and this report will count in the examination, you may be sure; for the first Communion we cannot have disobedient children any more than idle ones."

Thus, gentlemen, the mere expectation of the examination influences the children, and stirs them up both to the study of their Catechism, and to good behaviour at home, at their schools, at the Catechism, and in short, everywhere.

The examination is excellent also for training the children in really praying: why? because, perhaps for the first time in their life the children pray then because of a want which is present and felt, a want which the examination makes them conscious of; and when we say to them, in the week which

immediately precedes it, "Pray well, my children, if you wish to pass a good examination, ask the good God to give you the grace for it." They understand it, and while they are doing their best to study, they also really pray.

I know an excellent Catechist who made admirable use of these examinations, not only through them teaching the children to pray, but also inspiring in them the spirit of compunction and penitence; and besides the prayers at the Catechism, which he knew how to make unusually fervent, he suggested also to them little practices of piety and of penitence, prayers to the Holy Spirit, to the Blessed Virgin, to their good angel. Thus he used the examination as a means of introducing the children to practical piety, true piety, as well as of making them learn the Catechism.

The examination then should be announced a long time beforehand, and in order that this great event should excite great expectation in the children, and should very much fill their minds, these unknown examiners who will come to question them should be reported as severe, and "your fate, my children, will be placed in their hands."

In short, the examination must, for the time, be the great business, the one thing of interest at the Catechism and in the families; in this way you will have the children, so to speak, in hand. Not that we must try to make them have a childish terror of this examination; but it must be made appear to them as a thing of the last importance, it must urge them on to very serious effort.

It is conducted too with great solemnity. The Curé, the Dean, all the Catechists, and the parents themselves, are invited to it:

"It turns," says the *Méthode de S. Sulpice*, "on the actions belonging to the theological virtues, on the prayers which every Christian ought to know, and upon a certain part, settled beforehand, of the diocesan Catechism. The questions are upon the letter, and upon the meaning. The examiners, notwithstanding their reputed severity, ought to consider the different capacity of the children, asking harder questions of those who have greater powers, limiting themselves to the essential with those who have less intelligence, being gentle or firm, holding in suspense or encouraging by hopeful words, according to the way in which each one answers."

At the meeting next after the examination the solemn announcement is made of the marks and of the place allotted to the children; this announcement is still, after the examination, provisional, only after the second is it final. This announcement again is a great means of influence in the hands of the Catechist, in fact it is one of the greatest. I remember, gentlemen, still, the terror, for that is the word, which I saw all around me when I slowly unfolded the large sheet of paper, which contained the dreaded list. No child, not even those who had answered best, was sure beforehand of his admission, because notes on good behaviour both at the Catechism and in their family were reckoned, and it was well known that these notes were taken in all earnestness.

On the day of this announcement the meeting takes a particular grave and austere character. The usual reading on the life of Decalogne is omitted, the announcement takes the place of it. After having explained why the report on the examination had been kept back, and how much consideration and thought had been given as to the children to be admitted or sent away, the Head Catechist then, slowly and impressively, reads out the different lists of the children to be admitted, commenting as he goes on, after the following manner. After the list of those who have the best notes, he says, "These are the children with whom we are satisfied, and who are received; but there are yet six weeks to the first Communion! There is another examination to go through, another list to be made; let them take care, and redouble their zeal!"

When he comes to the list of children whose notes are only just sufficient, he insists strongly on the uncertainty of their position, and on the necessity they are under of making fresh efforts. "As to these last," he says, "they also are received, but I must tell them they only hang on to the Catechism by a thread . . . by a thread! . . . we shall be more severe, we shall expect more at the next examination, because it will be nearer to the first Communion; very certainly, if they are not much better than they are at present, we shall not be able to receive them."

As to those who are sent away, the Catechist does not

mention their names, only pointing here and there to empty places. He says, "You see these empty seats, the places of those who have been sent away. . . . It is over, they no longer belong to the Catechism, from to-day they are shut out from it; I warned them not to come, I wished to spare them the disgrace of a public dismissal, which moreover is no less painful to myself than to them. It has cost us a great deal to separate ourselves from children whom we have loved, but it was necessary; our conscience made it our duty, we could not let them make what might have been a sacrilegious first Communion. . . . And even, my children, if you would know, those children whom we have received, we have only received with trembling. . . . Yes, with trembling, for we say to ourselves, We receive them, *we* do, but does God receive them? God sees the heart, but *we*, we do not see it! And though we have received you, God may have said, You receive him, but I, I do not receive him! It is this which makes us tremble, and it should make you tremble yourselves. . . ."

Such, gentlemen, was very nearly the language we held to these dear children; such were the real feelings of our heart in these great times of the week-day Catechism.

While the dread of this first examination, and the formidable expectation of the second, is still weighing on the children, a new stir is given to their soul at the end of the second period, at the final moment when they are about to begin their general Confession; this is given by the *Act of Contrition*. This name is given to a special gathering, the object of which is to prepare the children for their general Confession, chiefly by persuading and winning them to openness, sincerity, and the good intention of declaring everything to their Confessor, concealing nothing from him.

I have already said, gentlemen, why we must not leave it till the last days for the children to make this Confession. For what is one of the great hindrances to children making a good general Confession? Without any doubt, it is shyness, which so often makes them hide sins in Confession. . . . It is therefore of great consequence to caution them beforehand on this most important point, and this is done very successfully

by this special gathering, called the *Act of Contrition*, where every effort is made to strike them and impress them.

In the first place, unlike the examinations, it is only announced a few days beforehand, and guardedly. The children come to an unexpected meeting, where some great thing is to take place, but they hardly know what it is.

They have been told beforehand, not that day to say their prayers at home, they will say it at the Catechism. The hymn is not sung as usual, but the meeting begins with this prayer, except that it is preceded by a short but grave Admonition, in which the children are exhorted to pray better than ever, that they may obtain the help of God for this hitherto unknown exercise which is about to take place. The prayer is followed by a short meditation on putting off conversion, such as you will find in the Manual. After each point the Catechist stops, remains some time silent, then adds a few reflections in a quiet tone of subdued emotion, as if one of the children were speaking, and passes on to the next point. He finishes—the children then kneeling—by a resolution, namely, to be converted that very day, and to begin by a good Confession.

After the meditation comes holy Mass; it is of necessity on this day if the children do not usually have it. The children are prepared for it by a short and stirring exhortation: "More thoughtfulness, more devotion than ever, my children; you have so many sins to atone for, so many favours to ask of God. . . . The altar is a Calvary; you are here at the foot of the Cross with the holy Virgin, with S. John. . . . Ah! who has nailed the Saviour on this Cross? your sins. . . . Pray, so that from this Cross, from the Saviour's sacred wounds, from His wounded side, some drops of the divine blood may fall on your souls and blot out your sins! . . . Particularly at the Offertory prayer, when for the first time you cease to sing, you will think that the Priest is offering the divine Victim for you; and at the Elevation, when again you cease to sing, you will think that at that moment the Victim is sacrificing Himself, and you will cast your souls at the foot of the Altar, to receive the blood of Jesus falling on you."

They must be made to sing the hymns very reverently, those for this day are very beautiful: you can read them, gentlemen, in the *Manual of First Communion.* During the singing of the hymns, as well as throughout the holy Mass and the exhortation, the Catechists are watching over all, with a more than usual gravity, thoughtfulness, and earnestness.

Thus prepared, the children listen to the exhortation, which should occupy half an hour, three-quarters of an hour *at most.* It is easy then, if only the preacher chosen has some heart and soul, to touch these children and bring them to very serious reflection. Immediately after the exhortation and without adding a single word, unless the Act of Contrition has been a total failure, we dismiss the children to their respective confessors.[1]

Thus ends the second period of the week-day Catechism.

[1] It is needless to say that the Head Catechist, should have an understanding beforehand with the children's Confessors, so that they may be ready to receive them at the sacred tribunal immediately after the exhortation. Without this precaution, many children would not be able to make their Confession on this day, and would thus lose all the fruit of the Act of Contrition. The Confessors know that the sacred interest of the souls whom they have in charge is in question, and that every other occupation ought to give way to this. It may well be, if there are good reasons for it, that they may not desire that each child should begin at once to make his general Confession, but it is absolutely necessary that they shall be there to receive the children, and at least say a few helpful words to them.

SEVENTH DISCOURSE.

THIRD PERIOD OF THE WEEK-DAY CATECHISM.

In the third period—when, the Confession having been made, or at least begun, the children begin to improve a little—their heart must be prepared yet more closely and more deeply for the great day which is approaching.

Though already we may have gained a great deal with them, it must not be supposed that their conversion is accomplished; on the contrary, it is the time to labour for it more earnestly than ever.

I shall limit myself here, gentlemen, to pointing out to you the most efficacious means for finally gaining this object; also what the last Admonitions of the Head Catechist should be, and the last Instructions on the Holy Eucharist; then what part the second examination should play in this last period of the week-day Catechism, and the final announcement of admissions and dismissals. I will then say a few words on one particular method, which I believe to be a very great help towards getting at the heart of the children, in these days of their near approach to their first Communion; finally, I will speak of the eve of this great day, when the attendance of all their parents should be requested.

These details will bring us on to the opening of the *Retreat.*

I.

The hymns and the Instructions should turn on the Sacrament of the Eucharist—holy Mass and the Communion. Above

all—and this is the chief point—above all, the mind and heart of the children must be firmly grounded in the faith of the real Presence, by the promises and express words of our Lord, and by the tradition of the Church, strong, clear and constant from apostolic times.

This necessary foundation being laid, we must impress deeply on their soul that the holy Eucharist is the highest work of the love of God towards us. With this object, the holy Mass must be explained in detail; the general idea of this great Sacrifice, which continues the Sacrifice of the Cross, must be given them, and they must be thoroughly taught what are the four purposes of the Sacrifice; you must point out to them the five parts of which it is composed, the preparation, the Oblation or Offertory, the sacrifice at the Elevation, the feeding on the Victim in the Communion, and afterwards, the Thanksgiving; finally, they must be made to understand the inestimable happiness of communicating, the love of this divine nourishment must be kindled in their soul, the hunger and thirst for this Bread of Life, this sacred Drink, of which our Lord has said, "*He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*" "*He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me, and I in him.*" And you must make them see that it is by the all-powerful virtue of these divine words and of the Holy Eucharist that we are again brought near to God, and our perfect reconciliation and union with God is accomplished.

And while these Instructions are going on, the Admonitions of the Head Catechist should turn on the love we must bring to our Lord in this august Sacrament, on the sweetness of a fervent Communion, on the necessity of preparing oneself for it by an ever-increasing goodness, piety and purity of soul, &c., &c. His words should be more than ever affectionate and earnest, so as to touch the children, and with gentleness and with power to win them to God. To make them break off all connection with evil, he should often speak to them of sin, of the necessity of being reconciled to our Lord before receiving Him in the Holy Communion, of the unhappiness of children

who are not converted, and, a few days before the retreat, of the grievousness and terrible results of a sacrilegious Communion.

All these Instructions, all these Admonitions, sustained and quickened by the singing of hymns, and by fervent prayers, impress the thought of the first Communion more and more on the children, even to their inmost soul; they stir up all their best efforts, and finally determine them to strive earnestly for their conversion.

It is needless to say that during the whole course of these Instructions on the Holy Eucharist, holy Mass should be celebrated at the Catechism as often as possible; for then, more than at any other time, it is easy and of infinite profit to make them hear it aright, with an enlightened and lively faith.

II.

THE second examination then comes in, stimulating them yet more, and with all the greater power because on the one hand the desire to make their first Communion is now stronger, the fear of being sent away is greater; and on the other hand, the announcement which follows on this second examination is final.

On that day, gentlemen, there are most touching sights at the Catechism.

It is difficult to describe the happiness of the children who are received, certain at last of this first Communion, so long expected and desired; the words of the Catechist can then really have a powerful effect on their souls, he can draw out wonderful results from the favourable dispositions in which nearly all of them are.

Here, gentlemen, I should like to take you with me, so to speak, into one of these sacred Chapels,—at S. Sulpice, for instance, where things are done in perfection,—and show you to the life this wonderful time at the week-day Catechism.

On this great day of final admission, and after reading out the list, all those who remained in the Chapel, certain now of

the happiness to which they had aspired for so long, were at the height of bliss. Their first Communion for the first time appeared to them as a certain thing, with all its charms, and without a cloud. Every one said in his heart, "Then I am going to make it." And the Catechist never failed to profit by this supreme moment, when all hearts were open, and moved by joy and hope, to inflame them with most holy desires, to make them resolve on the most generous efforts against themselves, so as to be at last worthy of the inestimable favour; and all was ended by a fervent prayer, in which God was besought to arouse the lukewarm, to convert sinners, finally to make these dear children, admitted to the happiness of making their first Communion, worthy of it and of Himself.

It was really the most beautiful and touching sight. The heart and soul of their Catechist seemed to have passed into the soul of each child. All thanked God from the bottom of their heart, and as they went out, as if they were taking fresh possession of their dear Chapel, as if they had won it for themselves, they sang, with quite unusual delight, the celebrated hymn:

"Salut aimable et cher asile,
Où Dieu même instruit ses enfants!"

And the parents themselves, present at this meeting, to which they were all invited, with what happiness they listened to their children singing:

"De mes parens si plus docile
Sans murmurer j'entends la voix,
C'est à tes leçons, cher asile,
A tes conseils que je le dois!"

All, however, were not received at the examination, and admitted to the first Communion; and here, gentlemen, I have a very important observation to make.

Neither the examinations, nor the Admonitions of the Catechist, nor the Rule, would have any effect, if there were not one final resource, and this final resource is the dismissal from the Catechism, or the delay of the first Communion.

There are Curés who, very wrongly, though with good intentions, make to themselves almost a law never to dismiss any child, and they receive all, whatever they may be, for fear of grieving the parents, or making them angry. It is certainly strange to take this for a principle of action. No, gentlemen, you must not be afraid, if need be, to send away the children; only it is necessary that the children, the parents, and the masters of the schools should be well warned of it beforehand, and in good time. For who cannot see that this severity, once established in a parish, becomes the spring and the measure of all effort? Every one knows it, and conforms to it, and consequently they prepare themselves properly. And if otherwise, what unhappy risks you run! For I ask you, is there anything in the world worse than a first Communion badly made? And I add also, and I cannot insist on it too much, nothing is more grievous than a first Communion made too soon, lightly, without that maturity of mind and heart which is necessary; nothing is to be more regretted for the whole life.

In this country, and in these days, experience has always shown me that these first Communions, when delayed for good reasons, are very fervent, and very real. No doubt by dismissals we are likely to displease the parents, and draw on ourselves painful opposition. With the general ignorance and indifference of our times, the first Communion, to which from custom they still hold, is unhappily to too many parents nothing but a necessary form, a time to get over, after which a child becomes free, and can begin his apprenticeship. But for us, gentlemen, the question is not that a first Communion shall be made, anyhow, but that it shall be well made, and it is for us, if necessary, to resist the unreasonable haste of the parents. When they come to us, begin to complain, to excuse their children, &c., we must receive them with great kindness, listen to them with attention, and answer them with sympathy, give in to their complaints, if they are well-grounded; but if they are frivolous, remain inflexible, though still with gentleness, and enlighten them on the mistakes they are making.

Moreover, it is not necessary, and often it is not expedient

to put off to another year those children whom we have not been able to admit to the first Communion. They may still make it one by one: "It is easier by this means to put off those whose state of mind we are doubtful about; the children are less disheartened, and the parents are not so very anxious and importunate about the delay." (*Méthode de S. Sulpice.*)

For these first Communions which have been delayed, it is well to choose a festival, or a day when there is the monthly Communion at the Catechism, so that the children shall not be alone, and that a certain solemnity shall surround this great act in their life, and leave them a sweet remembrance of it.

III.

I HAVE spoken to you, gentlemen, of the care to be taken in forming habits of piety in the children, by advising them to certain practices of piety; such as the little private oratory at home, reading with meditation *Pensez-y-bien*, or other little religious books given them as rewards, repeating the *Souvenez-vous*, or using their *chapelet*.

Another means is, the Rule of Life preparatory to the first Communion, which is distributed to them at the opening of the week-day Catechism. We are careful always to have it printed at the back of a picture; it gives them great pleasure.[1]

"Another thing which we practise with very good result," writes one of your brethren to me, and his plan, that of lending them good books, is particularly useful for the poor children, and even for the rich, "during the week-day Catechism we lend the books for reading or meditation which we recommend, to all those who do not possess them."

But I wish particularly to tell you now, gentlemen, of another means which can be employed at this time, and which

[1] They should themselves, during the retreat, make out one for their whole life. This Rule is explained to them fully at the Mass of Thanksgiving, or during the little retreat before Confirmation. In my opinion it is a mistake to give this explanation at the end of the week-day Catechism, or during the great retreat of the first Communion; the time has not yet come for showing them how to do well in every detail of the Christian life; the object is to snatch them from evil. They ought to be entirely occupied with their conversion, and this would distract them from it.

I have known to be followed by the happiest results. I must indeed, as far as I can, disclose to you all the arts which can be practised in this holy ministry.

At this particular point of the Catechism, there is a way in which the children can really be inspired with the love of God, by a feeling which goes straight to their heart, namely by charity, by love towards the poorer children of the Catechism.

The spirit of the *family*, as I have said, gentlemen, reigns in a Catechism rightly conducted; these children, from seeing each other constantly, receiving together the bread of the Holy Word, and preparing soon to take their places all together at the same divine banquet, gradually come to feel affection one for another, and to look on each other as brothers. It is then proposed to those who are richer, or in more easy circumstances, to help in clothing those who are poor; and in the state of mind in which they then all are, there is no difficulty in making the children and their families accept this very touching and fraternal act of charity. They can easily be made to understand the value of almsgiving, the merit which it has in the eyes of our Lord, especially if it costs something, if it entails some sacrifice; and we tell them, what is also true, that it will not fail to bring down the blessings of God on their first Communion. You must then, gentlemen, as much as you can, keep up this touching custom of letting the poor children at the Catechism be clothed by the richer ones; yet not perhaps so much with the object of giving the poorer children the help they need, as of awakening the piety of the others by means of charity.

I remember one child who owed his conversion to this. He was an *Intendant* of the Catechism, and consequently correct enough in his behaviour; but he was devoid of piety, very proud, and cold as ice. He never prayed, very seldom sang the hymns. His tutor said to me, "I really despair of his first Communion. There is a hardness about him which nothing can touch." We had hardly any hope ourselves.

Now, the Friday after the final announcement of the list the children who needed clothing, and those who could help to

clothe them, were requested to let us know, privately, I need hardly say, on either side; and on that day (the following week being the last week) the *Admonition* turned upon charity. The next day they began to send us money; and at the gathering on the following Tuesday, we did not fail to praise the generosity of the children, and to renew the Admonition on charity. I, then, had given this second Admonition, and at the following meeting, on the Friday, one child struck me by his manner, his attention, the expression of his face; it was the child I am speaking of, gentlemen, our *Intendant;* after the Catechism, I said to my coadjutors, "It seems to me that —— is converted, he looks to-day quite changed: I begin to hope for a good first Communion for him." I was not deceived; we could plainly see it at the Retreat which began on the following Sunday, it was wonderful. But what then had worked on this child's soul? His tutor explained to me the whole mystery; it was this. I learnt that after the second Admonition on charity,—the first had only brought us an offering from his family,—after, I say, the second Admonition, in which I had urged the necessity of making a real sacrifice for this little brotherly almsgiving, the child of whom I speak, —he was very intelligent,—had been touched, and saying nothing to any one, he had taken all the money he had in his purse for his own amusement, it was eighty francs, and had sent them to me anonymously. This poor child had been uneasy for a long time, feeling sure his heart was not right, and not knowing how to set about changing it. The thought of this good work gave him a good hope. He did it, and this spontaneous, generous, hidden act, softened his heart; God blessed him, his first Communion was excellent, and thank God, he has not forgotten it.

You have now, gentlemen, seen the whole of the exercises, and if I may so express myself, all the apostolic *strategy*, by means of which we bring the children, through these successive periods and these great events of the week-day Catechism, up to the Retreat, when the great and supreme effort is made on the souls of the children; it is, as it were, the crown of the week-day Catechism.

IV.

But I cannot conclude all this, gentlemen, without saying a word to you about the parents, and what there is to be done by them, with them, and for them, on this great occasion of their children's first Communion. The fact is, that at this time, the most hostile are softened, the most indifferent are interested; it is much easier to approach them all; therefore we must take advantage of it. And in the first place, it is well, while the Catechism lasts, to have communications, and frequent communications with the parents; there will be no lack of opportunities. Too often, gentlemen, one does not know what excuse to make for visiting certain parents; the zeal in your heart for the good of their children is an excellent reason, and will certainly secure a favourable reception.

I very much approve therefore, gentlemen, of the custom which has been introduced in several parishes of this diocese, of the parents being invited to come themselves to the presbytery to commend their children to the charge of M. le Curé, and I wish very much that this custom may become general. It is a quite natural way of entering into relations with parishioners whom one hardly ever sees. And what useful truths one may be able to impress them with! I can give you an instance: the Dean of —— had refused for the first Communion several children who had not attended the Catechism for two years. One of the mothers, who had neglected all religious duties for some years, came to complain of her child's dismissal. After many reproaches, she ended by saying, "But only think, M. le Curé, supposing he should die!" "It would seem," answered the Curé, "that you are not afraid of death yourself, my dear daughter, for it is a very long time since you have made your Communion!" The poor woman hung her head, and resolved henceforth to fulfil her own duties.

Was not this one preaching of the good Curé worth a good many of another sort?

I believe that in the worst parishes, this most valuable practice could, by perseverance, be introduced. An Instruction given at the *prône* upon the advantages of the Catechism, and

of the co-operation which the parents can and ought to give to it, could hardly fail to be understood, and the results would soon be seen. M. le Curé of —— had the comfort of seeing a very irreligious man come one day to his presbytery to speak to him about his son. "M. le Curé," said the man, "you said at the beginning of the Catechism we must come and tell you about the children. Well! I am come to tell you that mine is disobedient and a liar; I can do nothing with him. You would do me a great service if you could make him better for me." Have we not already gained something with an irreligious man if we have made him acknowledge the happy influence of religion on a child's soul? May not such a step on the part of such men be the beginning of their own return to God?

But if the parents do not come, well! the Curés must go to them. "*Ite ad oves quæ perierunt.*" It is certain that in coming to talk with the fathers and mothers of what is dearest to them in the world, they will nearly always be well received.

Again, as is done in some parishes, whenever there is anything to be said about the children, the parents could be written to and requested to come; if it is in a large and populous parish, letters could be printed for this purpose, and signed beforehand; only a few words would need then to be filled in, and the letter could be given to the child, or to a master, at the Catechism itself. The effect must be good. There are besides, certain occasions on which it is very suitable to invite the parents to be present at the Catechism, particularly at the examinations; they come there and hear their children answer, and this interests them; or again, for instance, on the day the lists are announced, or at the larger Catechism, just before the opening of the week-day Catechism, or at the week-day Catechism, after the two examinations. There are other occasions: I will tell you on this head, gentlemen, what is done by a Curé in Paris, a very experienced Catechist, one too who sets the good example of conducting the Catechism himself for the children of his parish. "After each examination of the week-day Catechism," writes the Curé of S. Etienne-du-Mont, "we send for the parents of all those

children about whom we have the least thing to ask, and this includes nearly all. These gentlemen see them one by one; the effect of it is excellent, and more than once it has been followed by returns to God. Then finally, twice, just before the first Communion, I summon by a circular all the parents, for the opening of the Retreat, and for the Wednesday evening. There, on the first day, I speak to them of their children, and of the Retreat; I ask them to help us, to pray for them, &c. Then, on Wednesday evening, the very eve of the first Communion, I do a thing which I never myself imagined, which I own I thought impossible, when it was spoken of to me, but which has succeeded admirably; and this is the benediction of the children by their parents.

"I make them all come, I tell them the condition their children are in, the absolution they have just received, the desire these children have to ask their pardon for the past, the right they have to bless them, and that it is their duty to do so. They stand around their children, who are on their knees, and bless them with me; it is all grave, pious, solemn, not theatrical; but tears are in every eye, and the effect is excellent."

These, gentlemen, are indeed touching *inventions of zeal.* The Apostle speaks of the "manifold grace of God," *multiformis gratia Dei*, as taking all forms. And the same can be said of zeal. It multiplies, it transforms itself, it finds out ways for everything, it accommodates itself to all situations; for every difficulty it can find a solution. In its hands nothing is dry and barren; but then also we may say, nothing offers more opportunities, more occasions, or more success than this admirable Catechism of the first Communion; founded on the highest and most touching mystery of Christianity, coming, as it does, on the threshold of life, at the first opening out of the soul, to take possession of the child, to purify, to bless, to consecrate him, and to show to the fathers and mothers, in the change which it works in these young souls, and in the happiness which fills them, what a most sweet and most holy influence flows from the religion of Him Who said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me."

BOOK IV.

THE FIRST COMMUNION.

FIRST DISCOURSE.

THE RETREAT.

We are come, gentlemen, to the decisive moment, to the highest work of all, to the Retreat which follows the week-day Catechism, and finishes this work of God.

I.

In Holy Scripture, gentlemen, there are two expressions which very well express what a Retreat is: "*In se reversus*," "*recordatus Petrus.*" To go into Retreat, is to enter into oneself; to recollect oneself; it is to withdraw into the very depth of one's soul, *in se reversus;* and there to recall one's own ingratitude, and the goodness of God: *recordatus.* These two things are the very foundation, the very action of a Retreat. In ordinary life (and particularly in the thoughtlessness of childhood), one is carried out of oneself, by running after outward things, and God is forgotten, oneself is forgotten, everything is forgotten. We must retire into ourselves to know ourselves again, and in reflection and remembrance recover all we have lost.

The great thing then, on the eve of a first Communion, is to snatch the children from this outward life, from all this frivolity; then we must introduce them to the interior life, draw them into themselves, bring them into that inner depth, even to that sanctuary of the soul, where God and the soul meet; where the soul, again face to face with God and itself,

remembers all the Divine goodness, sees, and at last mourns over its long forgetfulness and unworthiness.

Everything should be done to bring the children to this point; for from the remembrance of the goodness of God and of their own ingratitude, comes contrition for their sins, and their true conversion.

But all this is not easy; and therefore, quite at the last, at the decisive moment, there must be a Retreat, which is something quite different from what has gone before. I hardly know how to make you grasp my meaning; true, it is the same Chapel, there are the same children, the same Catechists, almost the same exercises; and yet everything is changed. However grave and solemn the week-day Catechism may have been, what is going to take place there is grave and solemn in quite another way.

The mysterious power of religion over souls is never so plainly seen as here. Something wonderful is going to be accomplished in all these young hearts, with force, and yet at the same time, with irresistible gentleness; here grace is about to obtain its supreme triumphs; they will not be able to resist it; they will be forced to yield and give themselves up; in short, here the good God is waiting for them to save them.

Here, too, their Catechists are waiting for them; yes, there we may wait for the proudest and most unyielding hearts, to conquer them; for the most frivolous and most inconsistent characters, to fix them; for hearts already deeply stained, to make them recover their innocence.

Instinctively the children feel all this, they dread it, and yet they long for it; they look on this Retreat as something extremely serious, but yet as a time for great blessings from God. Well, gentlemen, we must respond to all these feelings of the children about the Retreat; and therefore, if I may so express myself, we plunge them entirely into it.

Still, there is one remarkable thing I have observed about this Retreat, which, after what I have just said, will perhaps surprise you, but nevertheless it is very true, and very important: namely, that the transition from the week-day Catechism to the Retreat may very easily fail, and, what is

singular, and yet very true, may fail even the more readily, when the week-day Catechism has been best conducted, and has *succeeded* best.

Why so, and whence comes this rock ahead? From a very common disposition in children, and a very natural impression on the part of the Catechists.

The children who have followed with a good heart all the exercises of the week-day Catechism, think to themselves that the Catechism being finished, they themselves may stop also, taking no account whatever of what remains for them to do, not even suspecting that they need now, on the contrary, to redouble their efforts, that they have a quite new labour before them.

The Catechists, on their side, who have joyfully witnessed all the influence of the week-day Catechism, feel great confidence: "Our children are very well disposed," they say calmly; "they are going of themselves willingly into Retreat, and will put all their heart into it."

It is a mistake; and if under this impression the Catechists really let the children go into Retreat of themselves, without taking the trouble to prepare them for it, to initiate them into it, to impress them from the first quite strongly with the great idea and the great work of the Retreat, they will *not* throw themselves into it; and a certain time, more or less long, will be lost while these poor children, amazed, and so to speak stupefied, will not really be in Retreat at all, and will do nothing of what they have to do.

I say again, it is indispensable at once, and very strongly, to lay hold of the children, to lift them, so to speak, out of the ordinary run of their life and of their thoughts, and so to *plunge* them into the Retreat.

This is chiefly the affair of the Head Catechist; let him well understand that in this matter, his work is of the greatest importance from the very opening of the Retreat, and that it must be carried on on a higher level even than it has been in the ordinary course of the Catechism. Further, the Retreat once begun, has, together with its own special *character*, so to speak, certain incidents proper to itself, and from these arise

for the children very various needs and even dangers; delicate and important shades of difference to be noted, almost as various as the young souls themselves. It belongs to the Head Catechist chiefly, to follow up these incidents, to note these shades of difference, and to bring his influence and his words to bear upon them, a thing which the preacher, who is less *au fait* with his audience, cannot do so well as the Head Catechist.

After these preliminary observations, we will first see—by all which the Retreat does, and which would not be done without it—how necessary it is; then we will follow its influence, day by day, on the children, going with them through the different exercises which compose it; finally, we shall arrive at this blessed day, only to be met with once on earth, and not again but in Heaven—the day of the first Communion.

II.

If the week-day Catechism has been carried out in the way we have just described, we arrive at this point, that—by the work accomplished in the successive periods the children have gone through, and also by the exceptional exercises which we have called the *Events* of the Catechism; by all this skilfully combined and followed up—the work of the children's conversion is really very well advanced. But still, it is not accomplished, far from it; and the final and most powerful touch must be put to it.

For in reality, up to this time, what has been done? Hindrances have been removed, minds and hearts have been very seriously prepared; but the supreme *ébranlement* has not yet been given. Great impressions, those which reach the innermost depths of the soul, *ad divisionem animæ*, have not yet been produced; but, at this moment, the children have become wonderfully capable of them; the hour is come, they are ripe for the greatest things. What they can then grasp, what they can feel, what power grace has on their heart is truly marvellous; I can speak, gentlemen, for I have had

the experience of it; I have seen, seen constantly in these Retreats, quite incredible effects of the Word upon these children; as S. Theresa admirably says, "I have seen the grace of God light on these young souls, like a strong eagle, with extended wings; to snatch them from the earth, and lift them to the skies."

I have still, I have kept for forty years and have before me at this moment, a veritable treasury of these hidden miracles in souls; they are MS. books of Retreat, written by the children of my Catechism; by children of twelve years old, written with all the sincerity, the tenderness, and the purity of their impressions. You will see, gentlemen, by what I shall quote to you from them in the course of our discourses, what the children are then capable of, and what a Retreat can do in finishing the work of God upon them, and preparing them for their first Communion.

And besides, even in the best-conducted week-day Catechism, if it is a large one, there are always some children who have resisted, and over whom one cannot win a victory but in a Retreat; there are some who up till now have concealed their sins in Confession, and who only will be brought to resolve to own them in a Retreat; there are yet a much greater number who up till now have not truly repented, and who will only feel real contrition under the strong influence of a Retreat.

Most of them, besides, have not yet made real and serious resolutions for their life; I say, gentlemen, for life, and not only for the first Communion; for it must not be forgotten that the object of the week-day Catechism is not only to provide against a sacrilegious Communion, but to form Christians who shall remain such for ever; such is the greatness and the depth of the work. Now it is the Retreat and the Retreat only which causes these strong, decided resolutions to be made; in fact the thing which remains as the most persistent remembrance of the Catechism, which is never forgotten in later life, is a good Retreat of the first Communion.

Finally, gentlemen, I must add, that the Retreat is an admirable supplement to the week-day Catechism, if this Catechism has not been everything it should be. If it has

been incomplete, or has failed in any way, all is not yet lost; it may be all saved by the Retreat.

The Retreat, then, is indispensable; and if only the week-day Catechism has prepared them for it a little, the children are perfectly capable of it, even in country places; for why should not country children be able to follow a Retreat which is brought within reach of their capacity?

And, gentlemen, when you are occupied in this great ministry, you will find it to be so, I may even say that you have already found it so, in the country as well as in the towns. When your week-day Catechism is finished and the great day is approaching, when the moment has come for striking the last, grand blow, it is during the Retreat that you do it; it is the Retreat which makes up for everything, crowns everything; it finishes all the work which has been begun; it is the Retreat alone which sets the last seal on the preparation for first Communion.

Therefore, gentlemen, we ought to be thankful to the experienced and zealous Catechists who established this custom among us; for, strange to say, it does not exist everywhere. It would seem that in this respect France is the most favoured nation.

Still, the custom is not so thoroughly established but that you ought to do everything to keep it up and strengthen it in your parishes. You have to conquer the prejudices of certain people, who pretend to be afraid that we shall either weary the children or frighten them, in a Retreat.

There is no foundation for such fears. In fact, how long do these exercises last? Three days, besides the opening meeting, which takes place the evening before. No doubt a Retreat of eight days would be too long, just as a week-day Catechism of eight months would also be too long. Three days is enough, and not too much. These three days pass very quickly; the exercises are quite within their capacity: every care is taken, every consideration made for their age, for their inexperience in these things, for their unfitness for meditation, their volatile spirits, and their sensitiveness of imagination; and they are helped, and given all necessary

aids. It is very easy to make the parents understand this; they will not even decline to help forward the Retreat, if you know how to speak to them about it rightly. In the letter, gentlemen, which I had the honour of quoting to you from M. de Borie, you saw what was his excellent custom with regard to the parents. In France, moreover, it is very rarely that we meet with families who put any obstacles in the way of a first Communion Retreat. The custom, thanks to the zeal of the pastors, has so far prevailed everywhere, that it hardly comes into the mind of even irreligious parents to complain of it.

But how is such a Retreat to be conducted and governed?

III.

All means, however efficacious, fail grievously, if they are not well employed; therefore when I am speaking of the wonderful advantages of a first Communion Retreat, I mean a Retreat well conducted and well carried through.

What has to be done, gentlemen, is not simply to bring the children, for several days, more or less often to the Church, to address to them a certain number of Instructions, and then to leave them to spend their time as they please. A true Retreat is quite another thing. It is not merely preaching, it is a work, a great work. If the Catechism is not only an Instruction, but a work, with much more reason should we say the same of the Retreat. Besides the preaching, there must be a continuous, constant action, directing everything, helping everything, even the preaching itself; watching over the children, even when they are out of sight. Quite a *labour* must be spent on souls, and this should be the work of all, but particularly of the Preacher, and yet perhaps still more of the Director of the Retreat.

We all know there must be a Preacher, but it is not so well known that the Director of the Retreat is quite as necessary as the Preacher.

There are, in fact, in a Retreat of first Communion two very

distinct things, but each as necessary as the other—direction and preaching; the whole success, gentlemen, depends on these two things, and consequently as much on the Director as on the Preacher.

The Director is the Head Catechist: and his part in the Retreat is of supreme importance. It is he who governs everything; it is he who maintains good order, and silence—not only an exterior, material silence, but a silence, an inward concentration of the soul; it is he who gives all the Admonitions, and it is the Admonitions which keep up the order, the connection, the force, and the value of all the other exercises. Admonitions are the soul of a Retreat, particularly of a first Communion Retreat. Before the preaching, it is he who chooses the hymns, gives them out, and paraphrases them—an exercise which sometimes has more effect than the sermon; it is he who teaches the children to value and think much of the Preacher, and prepares them to listen to the Word of God with deep reverence. After the preaching, during the four or five minutes which follow the sermon, without repeating what has been said, it is he who in a few grave and emphatic words, suggests to the children, who are then on their knees and attentive, what reflections to make, what affections to produce in themselves, what resolutions to make; it is he, in short, who helps them to work at that inner labour, which, by themselves, they would not be capable of. It is his place even, if need be, to supplement the sermon, in case it has been cold, or wearisome, or above the children's understanding.

In short, if a Preacher is indispensable, a Director is no less so; the truth is that they support and strengthen one the other; and for my own part, I shall never consent to be Preacher at a Retreat of first Communion where there is not a good Director.

Just imagine two Retreats: one, where the children, having arrived at the Church, are left to themselves, hear an Instruction, given by an unknown Preacher, and then go away; the other where hymns are sung about the Retreat, where the Head Catechist comments on these hymns in an interesting way, relates some touching story, announces the subject of the

sermon, and gives Admonitions, and has a hymn sung in harmony with it first; after the sermon follows it up by a little spoken meditation, in which he suggests to the children and helps them to make definite resolutions; this Catechist is known and loved by the children; he knows and loves them; he has followed them, studied them closely; he knows what will reach their soul; he knows the Admonitions he has already given them, those which he has yet to give them, or give them again if they need it; who would not prefer the second of these Retreats?

Nothing, gentlemen, can take the place of this influence of the Director of the Retreat; it is his direction which governs everything, his attentive watchfulness which finds a remedy for everything; his voice which stimulates the negligent, quickens the weary, and sustains the weak; his voice which inspires zeal and communicates fervour.

As to the preaching, above all things it must be within the grasp of the children, and it must be directed entirely towards the great object of the Retreat, which is the first Communion; it should be forcible, energetic, animated, penetrating, should reach the soul of the children, and there leave deep impressions; for this purpose it should treat of the great truths, Sin, Salvation, Death, Judgment, Hell, Sacrilege, and also of more gracious subjects, the happiness of repentance, the mercy of God, the return of the prodigal son.

Add to these subjects the preliminary Instruction on the Retreat, the exhortation to perseverance on the day of first Communion; a discourse on the Blessed Virgin, another on the Baptismal promises, and you have the entire but necessary framework of a Retreat of first Communion.

It would be absurd to come here to speak of other things, or preach sermons made for a different auditory.

The great point, during the Retreat, for the Director as well as for the Preacher, is to speak constantly to the children who have not the desire of conversion. Everything ought to be said and done with a view to them, and at the same time it is the best that can be said and done for the others. For this inspires all with the needful compunction, it keeps them all

in sentiments of humility, of penitence, and of the fear of God; it is this which is the greatest help in inspiring them, for the day of their first Communion, with love for our Lord, together with repentance of their sins.

Here, gentlemen, it may be of use to say, that with children, perhaps more than with grown people, we must avoid all exaggeration, whether in the doctrine we are teaching, the illustrations we employ, or the stories we relate; precisely because these young souls give themselves up without suspicion to what we say, we must not abuse their openness and simplicity; there should be no too violent emotions, no vain terrors, no stories in which the miraculous goes beyond what is likely to be true; one can be very eloquent and very pathetic, and yet always simple and true.

I must add finally that the preaching cannot be done by one of the Catechists. We desire to produce a quite unusual impression on the children, to touch them more than they have ever been touched; in short, thoroughly to convert them. Only a Preacher, or a strange Missioner, to whose voice the children are not accustomed, is suited for this great and solemn ministry.

The Head Catechist himself would not be the person for it. Just in proportion as he is admirable for the direction and the familiar Admonitions of the Retreat, so is he not suitable for this *extra*-ordinary preaching. M. Borderies went so far as to say, "Though my children certainly love me much, and would rather listen to me than to another Preacher, I should prefer that the beadle should preach to them at the Retreat, than that I should do it myself."

I will say further, that one Preacher should go through the entire Retreat. A Retreat where there are three or four Preachers, has no unity, no strong influence, no serious results. None of them have the time to study the children, or be interested in them. It may happen that the same things are uselessly repeated, and other very necessary things passed over in silence.

It follows from all this, gentlemen, that the choice of a Preacher is very important; every Priest is not fit for this kind of Ministry.

The *Méthode de S. Sulpice* says with reason, "Experience sufficiently shows that many learned Preachers, who are successful in the great pulpits, are not so in this ministry for the young. They give the children fragments of discourses prepared for the *Stations;* there are beautiful sketches, great reasonings, spiritual allusions, but there is nothing in them suitable to children in Retreat for their first Communion."

IV.

And now, gentlemen, what is the order, what are the exercises of a Retreat of first Communion?

There are parishes where the children are brought together four times a day; there are others where the Retreat has only two meetings, one in the morning, from eight o'clock to half-past ten; the other in the afternoon, from half-past two to five. I prefer this last method. And for this reason, gentlemen, that two exercises seem to me less burdensome for the children, and more efficacious. In bringing the children together four times there are eight journeys; it is a great deal of coming and going; and the meetings are of necessity too short to produce any deep impression on the children.

These two meetings daily, are thus arranged. In the morning, prayer followed by meditation, Admonitions; then holy Mass with the hymns; finally the sermon, preceded and followed by a few words from the Head Catechist. In the afternoon, the opening hymn, a beautiful story, Vespers, the sermon, besides Admonitions and hymns interspersed throughout; the two hours and a half which these exercises occupy are thus well filled up, and pass quickly.

In the Admonitions, which I called the soul of the Retreat, the Director will explain to the children the state of mind in which they should be during these holy days, and show them how to employ their time well. He will tell them how they can occupy themselves between the exercises with the examination of their conscience, with prayers, with good reading, and above all with writing their notes of Retreat. These MS.

books of Retreat should contain not only the *résumé* of the sermons they have heard, but their own impressions, their resolutions, and their rule of life.

The custom of these MS. books, gentlemen, is excellent; the children must be kept up to it, and very much encouraged in it. For this reason; the Director will take pains to make them see how pleasant it will be for them some day to renew all these impressions, all these remembrances of their first Communion, and will show them that they have in these books, as a child himself expressed it, "a precious treasure, to which in later years they will go to draw their knowledge, their comfort and their strength, if they have troubles or temptations." To teach them how to do this work, which interests them and gives them a pious occupation at home between the meetings, it will be good to read to them for a few minutes every day, something from the older MS. books, written by the best children in former years. These short readings, just at the right moment, have always produced very happy results. They touch them and encourage them, in showing what children like themselves have done, and what they themselves can do.

It need hardly be said that the children during the Retreat ought to have no other occupation but the Retreat itself. The schools, if they are at school, or the families, if they are at home, must give them up entirely to the Retreat for these three days, and must suspend all other teaching. In the schools, the children of the first Communion should not be allowed to mix with the other children; they should be apart, whether in the school-room, or at recreation-time, and under special *surveillance*, though this should be altogether friendly and paternal; and it is self-evident that there should be no punishment during those holy days.

The recreations are also a subject of very serious Admonitions. During the Retreat, they should be less noisy, more restrained, more innocent, angelic. In many schools, kept by Sisters and Brothers, they have hymns sung to the children at recreation time; it is an excellent custom.

But as to children whose parents pass the day away from

home, in workshops or elsewhere, or country children, how are they to be watched over and kept in Retreat, when away from the exercises? "We must," says the *Méthode de S. Sulpice*, "find a house they can go to, where they will be watched over by some charitable person. The houses of benevolent societies, the schools kept by Sisters, or by the Brothers of Christian Doctrine, the presbytery in small country parishes, all these will furnish a refuge for these poor children; some of them even might be taken in by 'devout women,' who would gladly perform this work of charity, particularly if they have been engaged in preparing them for their first Communion."

But indeed, gentlemen, you have established this very thing generally throughout the diocese, and I am delighted to commend your zeal. I am charmed to hear also how gladly the school-masters and mistresses have helped you on this point.

You see now, gentlemen, what is the order and course of the exercises during the Retreat, and also how one can provide for the quiet thoughtfulness and attention of the children, and for a good employment of time.

With all this, and in spite of all possible zeal, it may happen that a Retreat will not produce all the fruits we hoped for from it; what would it be then if these necessary measures were neglected?

I consider, gentlemen, as badly worked, and as certain to result in most grievous failure:

A Retreat *without hymns;* if they do not sing, they scarcely pray; their souls remain barren, their hearts frozen.

A Retreat *without note-books;* they are not always possible for all, I know; but where they are, then not to encourage and help the children to make notes, is to deprive them of one of the most efficacious means they have for impressing on themselves the things they have heard, and engraving them for ever on their mind and heart.

A Retreat *without meditations;* it is so easy, in a short meditation on the great truths, to make a very deep impression!

A Retreat *without stories;* a narrative generally attracts the children very much, and gives an opportunity for saying

some things which are all the more effective from being unexpected.

A Retreat *without Admonitions;* the children need to be continually warned, informed, interested, and excited.

A Retreat *without* a certain and quiet *resting-place* for the children, whether at home, or in their schools.

Finally, to sum up all in one word, I look upon a Retreat as deplorable in which nothing can be seen which shows real zeal, true love of souls and of God.

V.

THE Retreat opens in the afternoon of Sunday, supposing, as is usual, that the first Communion will be on the Thursday. The opening meeting, as you must see, gentlemen, is of the greatest importance.

The object is, to take possession of the children from the first moment, to give them immediately a high idea of the Retreat, a true and deep impression, and an ardent desire to profit by it.

The hymns, the Head Catechist's Admonitions, the *Billets*, the sermon, all work towards this end.

Even the voice of the Head Catechist should reveal an earnest anxiety, a special tenderness; it should touch the children by a more than common tone of kindness, of gentleness and affection; while at the same time his attentive watchfulness will be shown in the Admonitions, full of force, of preciseness, and of detail, which he will give upon the Retreat.

We are fortunate, gentlemen, in possessing admirable hymns, composed expressly for the opening of this Retreat; simple and impressive hymns, which furnish an easy and suggestive theme for comment; I may say, gentlemen, that these hymns, sung as hymns always ought to be sung, have produced veritable revolutions in souls; it will be enough here to remind you of one:

> "Voici les jours de la miséricorde
> Depuis longtemps desirés de mon cœur," &c.

After this hymn and the Admonitions, the *Billets* are explained, either by the Curé, or some person of distinction, whose visit adds to the solemnity of the meeting.

The following are the questions proposed :

1. Why have you to make a Retreat before being admitted to the first Communion ?

2. Do you think it will be enough to be present at the exercises of the Retreat, if you would profit by it ?

3. What resolutions do you intend to make ?

4. Do you think it will be necessary to write your resolutions ?

To these important questions the children reply. Nothing can describe the effect of these children's little voices, sounding there in the midst of a quite unwonted silence and expectation, themselves speaking the first words, the first preaching of the Retreat. And you see, gentlemen, too, how these questions enter into the very heart of the Retreat. You have but to explain them briefly, and you can touch the children greatly. The sermon which comes afterwards finishes the work of making the great idea of the Retreat enter into the depth of their soul.

To prepare them to listen to the sermon, they may be spoken to almost in the following terms :

"Now, my children, be very thoughtful and attentive, for if ever thoughtful attention was necessary, it is to-day. Before letting you listen to the sermon, I feel bound to tell you one word, which once made a very deep impression on myself. . . My children, Heaven is going to open over your heads ; God, in this Retreat, is going to pour His grace upon you, as if in torrents. . . I hope, I expect everything from God . . . I fear nothing on His side, but I do fear on yours. My dear children, I fear lest you should abuse His grace ; it would be the greatest unhappiness for you. . . And to preserve yourselves from this, listen to this saying, which is one of the most vivid recollections of my childhood . . *'Fear Jesus, Who is passing by, and returns no more.' . . Time Jesum transeuntem, nec amplius redeuntem.* . . What do these words mean ? Fear Jesus, Who passes by, and returns not. . . Why fear Jesus ? Since when has He been to be feared ? And when then will He pass ? . . . My children, fear Jesus, Who passes by, and Who returns not. . . He is going to pass through the midst of you during this Retreat. . . He will pass and pass again continually ; my children, do not let Him pass without opening your heart

to Him, for He would pass by, and not return again. . . *Time Jesum*. . . He is going perhaps to pass in a moment, while His minister is speaking, close to you, my child, who have been resisting Him for so long a time, you who up till now have abused all His graces. He will pass by again to urge you, to beseech you to be at last converted; to hate your sins. . . Take care . . . Fear Jesus Who is passing . . . do not resist Him any longer, He would perhaps pass by for ever, and never return. . . Oh! the terrible misery of a child who has suffered Jesus to pass by! and who is in danger of never seeing Him again. . . Oh! my children, do not let this misery be yours, you would be lost. . . Then never forget this terrible word . . . set it in the depth of your heart, and say to yourselves: I must fear Jesus Who is passing . . . Yes, I must be afraid to let Him pass by, and therefore I will be always perfectly thoughtful and attentive. . . At the very moment that I let myself be distracted, perhaps Jesus Christ will pass . . . He will knock at the door of my heart . . . I shall not hear . . . I shall let Him pass by . . . perhaps I shall never see Him again. . . My children, *Time Jesum transeuntem, nec amplius redeuntem.*"

After this Admonition, a hymn to the Holy Spirit follows, then the sermon, during which the children are to be perfectly still, their arms crossed or their hands joined, taking care not to cough, or use their handkerchief, or move their feet. After the sermon, the Preacher, at the foot of the Altar, begins to sing the *Veni Creator*.

After the *Veni Creator*, the first verse of which is sung kneeling, and the rest of it standing, the children sit down and it is announced to them with some emotion and yet quietly, that the Retreat is opened, then a very few words recalling to them what the Preacher has said, and supplying anything which may have been omitted on the necessity of the Retreat, and on the way of going well through it.

In general, in all the Admonitions given during the Retreat with the hope of converting the children, we should speak to them in accents full of zeal for their conversion, but yet with great gentleness, beginning sometimes by frightening them, but always ending by encouraging them with quite fatherly kindness. Any very loud speaking must be avoided, and anything forced, and also a sort of fervid imagination, which only surprises, and does not touch.

Thus the Retreat is opened.

The characteristic of this meeting is to be particularly

touching, and attractive; nothing in it makes the children too sad, or too much alarmed. The Retreat is exhibited to them here as a time of mercy, where the Lord lavishes His most abundant, His most precious blessings, "showers of blessings"; and the first Communion, now so close,—everything too reminding them of its desired approach,—sheds a sweet and deep feeling in their soul.

Still, the Admonitions of the Director and the first sermon on the necessity of the Retreat for the conversion of sinful children, make them understand that the supreme moment is come; that war is definitely declared against sin; that it must be finished with, that they will find themselves called to make a grand and irrevocable choice between good and evil, between life and death, between heaven and hell. Thus they go away from it very much moved, sometimes even to the depths of their soul; moved with what there is to be done, with the necessity of doing it, and of doing it without delay, for there is not a moment to lose, and they cannot do otherwise.

This meeting, and that of Wednesday morning, and sometimes Tuesday evening, are those which strike them most.

Before the prayer, the children being already on their knees, a short Admonition, but forcible and touching, can be given to them, urging any one amongst them who has concealed some sin in Confession, to tell it as soon as possible. The Retreat will only be a burden to him and useless, as long as he is not determined to do this. They can be told also of a child who died soon after a Retreat, to urge them all to go through this Retreat, as if it were the last in their life. "Let us join ourselves to so many holy souls who at this moment are praying for you, that the Lord may bless this Retreat."

After the prayers (which consist of *Our Father; Hail, Mary!* and the *Souvenez-vous*) the announcement for the next meeting is given, and then the children are silently dismissed, having first been warned to look well at their places that they may know exactly where to go the next morning.

Then their going out is carefully guarded, even to outside the Church, so that they may meet with nothing to distract them.

SECOND DISCOURSE.

THE MONDAY AND TUESDAY OF THE RETREAT.

The great labour of conversion, the hard battle with souls, is on the Monday and Tuesday of the Retreat. The Director follows with an attentive and vigilant eye all the phases of this battle; it is the Preacher who strikes the great blows; but it is the Director who prepares them, and makes the result certain.

Ah! gentlemen, there must be no mistake about this, the victory over souls, even children's souls, is not to be won without hard labour; and however prepared they may be, by all the preceding work of the week-day Catechism, for this supreme and decisive moment of the Retreat, there needs, for their final conversion, a great redoubling of zeal; there must be prayers and tears before God, there must be most extreme efforts. I, who have had to support this labour for so many years, I know what it costs, I can vouch for it to you! But it must also be said, the gain is worth the trouble. It is the time for gathering in all one has already sown; or alas! of losing all! It is the time for putting the seal on the work, or of seeing it, alas, sadly vanish away! But a Retreat which God blesses, what does it not do for the children! In what purity it presents them at the Holy Table! And the devoted Catechists, how largely, on the day of a fervent first Communion, are they repaid for their zeal!

The Director then, as we have said, animates and conducts everything; I should like to describe to you, gentlemen, this laborious but productive work, which never ceases for a single

instant during these three days; it is truly a travailing in birth, to give life to all these young souls.

I.

The day begins with meditation. A few words from the Director, before the prayer, explain to the children the importance of this exercise, to which they are quite unaccustomed:

"One of the prophets says, 'The whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth to heart. . .'

"Nothing is more true, dear children. . . Why up till now has sin made havoc with your souls? . . . Because you have not thought, you have not meditated. . . Why are you beginning to be a little better? . . . Because you are beginning to reflect, to meditate. . . Who are those who will profit most by the Retreat, and will make their first Communion best? Those who will make the best meditations. . ."

The meditation is made by a Catechist. It should last, including the prayer, for twenty minutes at the outside. The Catechist is on his knees the whole time, his face turned towards the Altar; he must speak slowly, simply, devoutly; putting himself in the children's place, speaking to himself as if he were one of them. . . . He pauses sometimes, then goes on again after a short silence. Generally the sermon of the evening before forms the subject of the meditation. We make the children sit down after the prayer, and they listen, still sitting; it spares them fatigue, and also makes it easier to keep a watch over them. In a general way, through the Retreat, we must avoid all needless fatigue for them, or any excessive length in any one of the exercises. We make them stand up when the Preacher comes in, or for any other reason; then we make them sit down, then again kneel; every change of position is a rest for them. They kneel for the resolution, and then again sit down after the *Sub tuum* to sing a hymn, and listen to the Admonition preparatory to holy Mass. After the Mass is another hymn and another Admonition. In this Admonition the Director suggests to the children certain good sentiments; here also he introduces those readings

from the MS. Retreat note-books of which we have spoken; here, as the Retreat goes on, he questions the children on their dispositions, asks them what state they are in; talks to them of time which is passing, the first Communion drawing near, he urges them, he entreats them, he does everything in all kinds of ways for their soul and their faith.

The beautiful hymns of L. Racine, "*Grâce, grâce, suspends l'arrêt de tes vengeances,*" "*Reviens, pècheur, à ton Dieu qui t'appelle,*" or the touching one by Monseigneur Forbin Janson, "*Hélas, quelle douleur,*" sung thoughtfully, quietly, have an admirable effect, and give occasion for paraphrases, which never fail in greatly impressing the children.

By the Retreat note-books I have before me, I can see that a great many verses from these hymns went to their soul like darts, and there remained. For instance, I read in one of these books:

"O my God, I deserve the reproach Thou gavest me this morning, in our hymn:

"'Plus de rigueur vaincrait ta résistance;
Tu m'aimerais, si j'avais moins d'amour!'"

I read in another:

"'Voici, Seigneur, cette brebis errante
Que vous daignez chercher depuis longtemps!'

"Yes, it is quite true, O my God! I am a wandering sheep, a lost sheep, and Thou, O good Shepherd, hast for long been running after me! but at last:

"'Touché, confus d'une si longue attente,
Sans plus tarder, je reviens, je me rends!'

"No, Thy trouble, O good Shepherd, shall not be lost; it shall not be in vain that Thou hast wearied Thyself to bring me back to the fold; here I am, I come back, I give myself up."

Thus by the hymns of the Retreat, and by the paraphrases upon them, the arrows of repentance penetrate the hearts of the children; as also later on, on the day of first Communion, the arrows of divine love will pierce them.

The Director then paraphrases the hymns of the Retreat; and that every day, morning and evening. The most favour-

able times are, in the morning, before and after Mass, and in the evening at the beginning of the meeting, before or after the prayers. It has been rightly remarked that this exercise sometimes produces more effect than the sermons, if you know how to employ it; but there must be no feebleness about it, no wandering from the point; the words of the hymns must always be brought in during the paraphrase, then the verses which have been paraphrased must be sung again; but you must avoid too much interruption, never speak till three or four verses at least have been sung; for there must be more singing than speaking, and only those verses must be paraphrased which have been sung, or are going to be sung.

Sometimes the Director, inspired by prayer and by the Holy Communion, draws out from the well of his own soul the Admonitions which he gives to the children. It is very difficult to mark out any rule on this point; the Director will find in his own piety, in his own love for God, and for His children, the things he ought to say, and the tone and accent in which to say them; it is in this way that, after the sermon, the children being on their knees, and their heads slightly bowed, he makes them reflect quietly for some minutes.

In a low voice, and slowly, with unction, gentleness and kindness, he suggests to them good resolutions . . . sympathizing with their sadness, pitying them . . . desiring to save them from the evils with which they are threatened . . . pausing and waiting a little, then going on again . . . it is one of the most important things to be done in the Retreat, and one of the most difficult to do well.

I will quote to you what an old Director says on this subject:

"During the Retreat it is the custom for the Director after every sermon to recapitulate the most striking truths; but often he himself preaches a second sermon, which sometimes has no other advantage but that of making the children lose the fruit of the first. It seems to me that the object which the Director should set before him, is not to produce any new effect, but solely to continue the effect which the preacher has produced on the children. They must then be spoken to in a very simple, very fatherly manner. In general too much gentleness and kindness cannot be shown to them during the Retreat. Anything like

shouting, which might frighten, but will not touch them, must be avoided. If the Director wishes to display great eloquence, or cleverness, or to speak finely, he will do no good at all."

If, however, the sermon has been weak or wanting, the Director, if he finds in himself the inspiration, can fill it up[1] by a vigorous recapitulation, ending by some strong and generous resolutions, in harmony with the subject of the sermon.

But it would be well for the Director to know beforehand from the Preacher on what subject he is about to preach, that he may prepare himself to follow. For instance, if the sermon is on death, the Director could add these short reflections:

"Well, my children, we must then die. . . It is very sad . . . it is a cruel fate! . . . I pity you, my children, you thought that life was everything. . . My dear children, life is nothing. From your mother's breast, and even before you were born . . . already you were condemned to death. . . Every step you take in life brings you nearer to the tomb. When a criminal is led to death, they bind his eyes. Your eyes are not bound, but alas! it comes to the same thing . . . you are ignorant of the day and hour of your death. What you do know is that it may happen any day, and that to-day you are nearer to it than yesterday.

"Already during the course of the Catechism there have been two children, one dead, the other at the gates of death. . . You knew them. . . Alas! if to show you the depth of an abyss a man should throw one of his own children into it . . . you would never forget this warning. . . God has just sent one of your companions to the grave, the other is on the very verge . . . and you do not tremble! Oh, be converted."

Then some moments of silence.

At every meeting, as may be supposed, the Director should give announcements concerning the Retreat; he can give rebukes, praises, well-deserved encouragement; he can also tell of some children who were not profiting by the Retreat, having been sent away; thus making the rest look well into themselves.

On the morning of Tuesday the Director should never fail to give the following Admonition, almost in the very words:

[1] Again, if the Preacher has not treated of the great truths of salvation, or has not treated of them in a sufficiently strong manner, the sermon might be supplemented by reading and paraphrasing a few pages of *Pensez-y-bien.*

"One thought strikes me, my dear children, see! half the Retreat is over, see how rapidly it passes! how many blessings for which we have to give account to God, and a severe account! . . . Are we at least half converted? . . . How many perhaps are still insensible! . . . How many who perhaps have not shed one single tear over sins which deserved tears of blood! . . . And yet, what does not our Lord do for us? . . . My children, it is not I, it is He Who is calling you. He is passing, ever since the beginning of the Retreat, He has been passing through the midst of you, knocking at the door of your hearts, asking you, His voice full of sweetness and love, My son, open thy heart to Me? And there are some who will not open to Him, who will not give Him their heart. . . Ah! I will say it again, my children, fear Jesus, Who passes and returns not! . . . You will never again find the grace you are despising to-day: '*Time Jesum transeuntem nec amplius revertentem.*'"

This saying of S. Augustine, gentlemen, is one which, if well explained and often repeated, makes the strongest impression on the children.

Such is the language of the Director, and he urges, he exhorts continually; and as the Retreat advances, his words become yet more strong and urgent. It is indeed the "*filii mei, quos iterum parturio*" of S. Paul.

The meeting on Tuesday evening is very important, there is no longer a moment to lose. If the Preacher has produced some effect, it would be sufficient, in the Admonition before the prayers, to speak to the children of the evil, and of the unhappy consequences of a lukewarm Communion, sometimes much too like a bad Communion: "I tremble for you, lest you should not be in sufficient dread of making a lukewarm Communion . . . Lord, let me rather die than make a lukewarm Communion."

If, on the contrary, there is reason to believe that the Retreat has been a failure, or has produced very little effect; if the children are very little touched, and need to be moved, *shaken* by something forcible and striking, then the Admonition may be somewhat in the following terms, unless the Holy Spirit of God, to Whose guidance we must always give ourselves up, suggests anything better:

"We are coming to the end of the Retreat; already we ought all to be converted; already we ought to have mourned for our sins with abundant tears. . . And yet, look into yourselves, my dear children; where is

your conversion? Ah! no doubt, there are some among you whose fervour and whose conversion do us good; there are some too who have been insensible up till now, but begin to be touched; yet one last effort, one generous *elan*, and they are converted! . . . Courage, good and pious children! Ah! what happiness, what comfort is preparing for you! . . . But alas! among the twelve apostles whom Jesus Christ had Himself chosen, there was found a Judas . . . could this gathering be more holy than the college of Apostles? Ah! I seem to see our Lord Jesus Christ appearing in the midst of you, saying these words to you, *One of you shall betray Me!* O heavens! shall we then have the grief of finding Judases among you? *One of you shall betray Me!* . . . Will it be you, my child, will it be you? you who will not be converted, you whom nothing has yet touched, you who persist in hiding a sin in Confession? . . . Ah! poor children, poor children! Everything has been exhausted to convert you! We beseech you, have pity, have pity on your soul! Why will you persist in destroying yourselves? I can read your hearts, perhaps your conversion only depends on a trifle. . . You are beginning to be touched. . . One avowal to your Confessor, one word, one single word perhaps, and you are saved! We have only one last resource for touching you; alas! if that fails, all is lost! . . . Prodigal children, let us all fall at the feet of our Lord. . . Beseech Him with tears to touch our hearts. . . Yes, my children, my dear children, come, hide yourselves in the wounds of our Lord, and tell Him. . ."

Here an ardent prayer to our Lord, concluding with an Act of Contrition and the resolution to make a good Confession. . . . The children can hardly resist this language, and these zealous efforts.

You will easily understand, gentlemen, that these urgent appeals from the Head Catechist, all these repeated attacks of grace on these young hearts, are a wonderful help to the sermons of the Preacher. If one is happy enough to have a true Preacher of the first Communion, whose words will be both tender and strong, simple and impressive, everything may be hoped for from the Retreat, they will fashion, they will, so to speak, form the souls; but such preaching demands real talent and serious preparation. It would be a great mistake to suppose that the success one ought to hope for is to be obtained without trouble and without labour. No, the whole soul must be applied to it, or nothing is done. For myself, I have been present at these Retreats, preached to by the first Preachers of the time, and they have produced the

happiest and the grandest results among our children, and at the same time for us Catechists they were, I cannot forget it, the first and best school of evangelical preaching; but it was because these holy preachers put the same care, the same zeal, into our work, as they would use for the largest *Stations*, and before the most brilliant audiences.

Finally, gentlemen, besides the meditations, the hymns, the Admonitions and the sermons, there is yet one more resource, admirably suited for gaining power over the souls of the children, and producing an impression on them which predisposes them excellently to all the rest—I mean stories; the service they render during the Retreat is quite invaluable. They are generally related before the evening sermon, and it is more than a rest for the children, it is a pleasure. They hang on your lips, listening, and if the stories are well chosen, if you know how to tell them well, they hardly ever fail of their effect, either for leading to repentance, or for exciting most ardent desires for a good first Communion. I related some stories during the Retreat of the Catechism of S. Hyacinthe; perhaps the conversion of S. Augustine, or another story which introduced two children, a brother and sister, with all their feelings on their return to God, all the real joys of their first Communion, and the effects they produced were really surprising; they are as fresh in my remembrance as if it were yesterday.

What is essential in this exercise, which, I must repeat, is one of the most useful and interesting of the Retreat, is to prepare well the stories one means to relate, to cut out all useless details, to introduce skilfully all that is suitable to the children, and to add a few very short reflections; they must be simple and pious, and above all appropriate to the circumstances of the Retreat and first Communion. Thus I have known the education and the first Communion of the Duke of Burgundy related with great interest; several incidents in the story of the martyrs of Japan, the martyrdom of S. Eulalie; the death of S. Louis, and his last advice to his son, &c.

In this way, or very nearly so, are passed the Monday and

Tuesday of the Retreat; it is, I must repeat, the labour of conversion, the battle with souls.

It may not be out of place to say here, gentlemen, that the meeting of the evening is always the most serious, and the most thorough; attention is generally quite perfect, and the impressions made, very deep.

But I scarcely need say that, whether morning or evening, the Catechists themselves must never fail. They must be more exact than ever at all the exercises. Let them never keep the children waiting either in the street or in the Church. In the Church they must be constantly on the watch. It has been sometimes observed that these poor children are more disposed to be idle and frivolous than during the week-day Catechism. While they are coming in, the Director should speak to no one, should not stir from his place, maintaining all in reverence.

Next time, gentlemen, I will speak to you of Wednesday, the very eve of the first Communion, the day of absolution. You see that we are drawing near to the end.

THIRD DISCOURSE.

WEDNESDAY OF THE RETREAT.

We could describe this day, gentlemen, by reversing the well-known words of the prophet, "*Ad vesperum demorabitur fletus, et ad matutinum lætitia.*" There are tears in the morning of this day, there is joy at even.

The truth is, it is the day of the deepest emotions both for the Catechists and the children. When we meet, my former children and myself, after so many years gone by, we almost always say to each other, "Do you remember Wednesday morning?—what grief! And Wednesday evening?—what joy! And the next day, what happiness!"

I.

THE MORNING.

In the morning the children prepare at last to receive the great gift of pardon from God, the absolution of their sins. It is then that we must do everything to bring their souls to perfect sincerity of Confession and Contrition, so that in each of them the return of the prodigal son to his father's house may be accomplished, in a true spirit of penitence, and that from the bottom of their heart they may all cry, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy child!"

The preaching then on this day will be in the highest degree austere and penitential. The hearts of these children—it must

be so indeed, or the work is lost—should be really contrite, broken, and humbled; to these violent strokes of grace will succeed an inexpressible sweetness and joy; but this morning —it is the moment for the last, the most supreme efforts of zeal; it must be such that no hearts, however hardened or frivolous they may be, will be able to resist.

This, you will see, gives a character of grave and severe solemnity to all the exercises. Children, catechists, and parents, all quite feel that a decisive moment is close at hand.

On this morning, the last Admonitions of the Director, then the Act of Contrition, followed by the adoration of the Cross, are what we look to for moving their souls, and accomplishing everything.

The Director is sad, cast down, overcome; and I assure you, gentlemen, there is nothing assumed in this. If a Catechist is all he ought to be, nothing in the world is more sincere than this sadness and these feelings. The children see it, and are impressed by it. Though one neither wishes nor ought to have recourse to any artificial means, any outward show, yet the sight of a black decoration on the altar, of a crucifix placed on the credence, and a small stand hung with black on which to set the crucifix, all this adds to the impression.

The Director says at once to the children:

"If ever it was necessary for us to meditate on the great truths of salvation, it is indeed to-day, my children; for your eternal salvation has to be decided. . . I am terrified to think of all that is preparing. . . It is to-morrow, yes, to-morrow that you will receive your God; to-day your soul is still stained; perhaps for a long time already it has been soiled in the eyes of Jesus Christ. To-morrow, perhaps, will it be pure and without spot? To-day, if you were to receive your God in the state in which you are, it might be that you would commit the greatest of crimes, and to-morrow it may be that He will come into your heart and there rest with delight. . . To-day, you are the children of the devil, heirs of hell. . . To-morrow, you will be the children of heaven and the friends of Jesus Christ. . .

"What then do we begin to do on this day? What does it bring with it? . . . Let us meditate on it. . ."

The meditation is on hell, or on an unworthy Communion, according to the sermon of the evening before. You will

understand with what care and with what sentiments this meditation ought to be made.

Afterwards this hymn is sung:

"Puniras-tu, Seigneur, dans ta justice,
D'un fils ingrat les longs égarements?"

When the singing is over, the Director gets up and paraphrases the hymn. He takes up the words again:

"'Puniras-tu, Seigneur, dans ta justice,
D'un fils ingrat les longs égarements?'

"I do not know, my children, it is a secret of God's! . . . He alone knows the limit beyond which there is no mercy! . . . But what I do know, my children, is this, that *quand je reviens devant Dieu votre coupable vie*, I see many things to be wept for, to be punished for . . . and to think there are some among you who have not yet shed one tear! . . . What I do know is that for a long time His grace has sought you . . . and you, insensible to this tender voice . . . hardened and ungrateful, you will not give yourselves up! . . . What I do know . . ."

He thus continues the paraphrase of the hymn, casting these reproaches of hardness and ingratitude, like fiery darts, into the souls of the children.

Then he stops, and remains silent for some moments, his arms crossed on his breast, looking around on the children with a sort of sorrowful uneasiness; then he begins again, still with the same sadness of tone:

"I am sad while saying these things to you; yes, my children, I am sad and very sad; my heart is wounded. There are some among you who are filling my soul with great grief. . . Yesterday evening I left you much grieving then at your insensibility. . . But I read a passage in Scripture which gave me some hope, it was this: *Ad vesperum demorabitur fletus, et ad matutinum lætitia.*—'Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.' . . My children, the night has passed, and my heaviness remains; the morning is come, and I have not found joy again. . . And now there is nothing more I can do . . . I have done what I could . . . I must remember that among the twelve Apostles whom Jesus Christ prepared for their first Communion, there was a traitor . . . I cannot hope to be more happy than Jesus Christ."

And after this exordium he goes on, sometimes making the children feel the horror of a sacrilegious Communion,

sometimes beseeching them with tears, in the name of the tender love of Jesus Christ, in the name of His Cross of Blood:

"And, my children, what yet adds to my sadness, is a saying of our Lord on the eve of His death; these are His words: 'Yet a little while and ye will see Me no more. Yet a little while, and the Light will be gone from you . . . darkness will come upon you, and you will walk, not knowing whither you are going . . . from one depth to another.' These words are terrible. . . Jesus Christ once used them to warn the Jews, who did not believe in His word, who were insensible to all His goodness. . . Well! my children, does not Jesus Christ use them also now to warn hardened children of the terrible punishment which awaits them? 'Yet a little while,' He says to them, 'yet a little while . . . a few hours yet of grace, of invitation, of mercy . . . yet a few efforts of My love to convert you, to save you, and after that you will see Me no more. I shall go away from you. You have abused My patience, My kindness, long enough . . . you have long enough despised My most tender entreaties. I have come, I have knocked at the door of your heart; I have passed and passed again a hundred times, and always with obstinate blindness you have shut that heart against Me, into which I longed to enter, that I might convert it, and snatch you from destruction . . . you would not. . . You were warned that you must fear Jesus Who passes and returns not . . . Now for the last time I am passing through your midst. Yet a little while, and you will see Me no more, I shall have passed without return. . . Fear lest for you the Light will depart . . . lest the thickest darkness come upon you . . . and you will only walk from one depth to another, even to the gulf of final impenitence and hell.'

"These, my dear children, are the words which plunged me into grief, and almost into despair. . .

"Oh! I entreat you, for you have yet some moments of grace and mercy to hope for, do not throw them away. Do not let Jesus Christ pass by. Open your hearts to Him. . . Beseech Him to come into them to convert them. . . Say to Him, 'Lord, the night is at hand, abide with us. Suffer not the darkness of death and sin to come on our souls.' But what am I saying, my children! Alas! I fear that to some of you all these words are useless, all these exhortations lost. . . They seem to choose their part with a knowledge of what it is, which makes one tremble, and a terrible obstinacy of which I could not have believed children to be capable. . . Ah! to these once again and for the last time I will say: Fear Jesus Who passes, and open your hearts to Him that He may convert them . . . or else let these unhappy children go away themselves, that to-morrow our Lord may not have the terrible grief of entering into their sacrilegious heart, there to be crucified anew."

After this Admonition, or another, which should be as forcible and as pathetic as possible, the hymn

"Au sang qu'un Dieu va repandre"

is sung at the beginning of the Mass; and at the end:

"Est-ce vous que je vois, ô mon maître adorable?"

Then the Director, after having again introduced some important Admonition, arrives at the immediate preparation for the Act of Contrition. . .

"To-day, my children, is then the day of heaven or the day of hell. All is won if contrition, repentance, good resolve at last find a place in your heart . . . all is lost if you have them not. . . The discourse you are going to hear is the last effort of the grace of God towards you. . . If, as I hope, it will touch you, will make you decide on a sincere conversion, you will come, my children, to mix your tears with the blood of your Redeemer, and with love to kiss those bleeding wounds which your sins have made. . . And then you will plunge, you will purify your souls in the stream of His blood, in the holy laver of penitence, in the Confessional; there He waits for you . . . and when you come back to us this evening, know for certain, if you have really told all your sins, if you have really had Contrition, when you come back to us you will be pardoned, you will be pure and happy. . ."

After one or two verses of the same hymn, the preacher goes into the pulpit for the *Act of Contrition*. This discourse should occupy not more than three-quarters of an hour, and be as touching, as penetrating as possible. Contrition should now be excited, chiefly on the ground of the goodness of God and the passion of Jesus Christ. At the conclusion the crucifix is shown to the children; they are reminded of all the sorrows our Lord endured for love of them, and the pitiable state to which their sins have brought them: sometimes the words of our Lord in the prophet Isaiah are recalled to them, "O My people, O My children, what have I done to you?" *Popule Meus, quid feci tibi?* or sometimes graces are asked for them of God their Father, "*Pater, dimitte illis*"; sometimes they are entreated not to betray Jesus Christ, and crucify Him afresh.

If the Act of Contrition should have been an entire failure, the Director must endeavour to supplement it, briefly, but with all possible unction.

If the Act of Contrition has been all it ought to be, there is not another word to be said afterwards. All that remains is for the children to adore the Cross in silence, and then be sent to their Confessors.

I said in silence, though sometimes there are many tears shed, many sobs; but the children are left to their own feelings, they are not even required to sing a hymn. We have only to take care that these sobs and tears do not degenerate into anything noisy, and that there is nothing artificial or exaggerated about them.

Then the Cross is placed on a stand hung with black, and resting on the steps of the Altar. The clergy come there to adore it; then the Preacher gives it to be kissed, first to the boys, who come and kneel at the Table of Communion, and to them he suggests some animating and touching thoughts; and lastly to the girls.

The children go in succession to the Confessionals, and are kept watch over as after the first Act of Contrition; nothing, however, is more edifying than to see what goes on there in the Church; all these groups of children gathered round the sacred tribunals, their penitent attitude, their own prayers, sometimes kneeling, sometimes sitting down; their zeal to excite contrition in themselves; their parents, who are often near them, are as much moved as their children; on leaving the Confessional, some prostrate themselves before the Blessed Sacrament, others at the foot of the Altar of the Blessed Virgin. What goes on there is really wonderful, everything makes one feel a tender kind of reverence, an unspeakable interest for these children; it is a sight worthy of the admiration of angels, and of the greatest blessings from God.

The truth is, gentlemen, that at no time does religion appear under a more august and attractive form; this purity, this innocence given back to these dear children, the happiness shed abroad in their soul, this mystery of God blessing, reconciling Himself with His creature, and at their tender age: all this is not of earth; one recognizes the thoughts, the inspirations of Heaven.

And one can only give a true idea of the effect of this day, by borrowing from the Gospel its most touching parables.

It is the day when the Good Shepherd finds His wandering sheep, and all joyous, "*gaudens*," brings them back to the fold; the day on which He not only finds them and brings them back, but wills also to nourish them with His own flesh and blood.

It is the day when the Father of the family finds His prodigal children, and after they have said, "*Pater, peccavi in cœlum et coram te; jàm non sum dignus vocari filius tuus*," touched with compassion, "*misericordia motus*," He presses them to His heart, gives them the kiss of peace, "*et osculatus est eum*," commands His servants to bring them the best robe, "*afferte illi stolam primam*," again to put the ring on their finger, and shoes on their feet, "*annulum in manu ejus, et calceamenta in pedes ejus*"; then has a great feast prepared, with choirs of music and joyful choruses, "*symphoniam et choram*," and exclaims, "Let us rejoice, for I have found My children who were lost": *filius Meus mortuus erat et revixit, perierat et inventus est!*

The Absolution is all this, gentlemen, it is the marvellous resurrection of the soul, the meeting of the heavenly Father with His children, the joy, the embraces, and then soon the feast, the songs of triumph.

And in fact, if from the profound truth of the Gospel parables we go back to the reality of things as we see them, on the eve and on the day of a first Communion, even in the most humble parish, all this is what we shall behold.

II.

THE EVENING.

Such then, gentlemen, is the meeting on Wednesday morning, and all which follows it. It is penitence, sorrow, repentance. How different is the impression, the whole aspect of the evening gathering! The children have all received absolution, they are reconciled with God, they are pure, their faces as well as their hearts are joyful, the

Catechists themselves, as if relieved from the weight of their children's faults, are radiant and happy; nothing can describe the charm of this last gathering. It is one of the most delightful moments of the Catechism. No more fear, no more tears, no more rebukes, no more sad presentiments; nothing but joy, confidence, peace, happiness. Only a pouring out of heart, in quiet and affectionate discourses, to make these dear children taste the bliss of belonging to God, and to make them love our Lord, Who has so loved them, Who is already making them so happy, and Who to-morrow, to-morrow! will put the crown on all His favours, on all His goodness, by the ineffable grace of the first Communion!

And in truth no laborious effort is needed then to find words which shall move and impress the children, which shall picture to them, in words which will never be blotted from their soul, the ineffable love of the Saviour, the delight of His first visit to their heart, of His first reunion with their soul; you have but to open your mouth and your heart.

The beautiful and touching hymn:

"Il est passé le temps de mes alarmes,"

is first sung, and nothing can describe the enthusiasm with which they sing every word of this hymn. We are sometimes even obliged to let them take it up again, and sing it twice following, to satisfy the longing and the need of their soul; but their happiness and emotion is beyond everything, when they sing, no longer the whole, but the two last verses of the hymn:

"Hélas, quelle douleur!"

You need only read these two verses, gentlemen, to feel all that must then be passing in the children's soul. Nearly always tears are in their eyes, when they sing:

"Non, non, c'est une erreur,
Dans mon malheur, je trouve un Sauveur."

These words can be paraphrased; or better still, quite familiarly and affectionately the words of S. Paul to the Corinthians, "*Etsi contristavi vos, non me pœnitet; etsi pœnitet,*

videns quod ad horam vos contristavi, nunc gaudeo, non quia contristati estis, sed quia contristati estis ad pœnitentiam."

"This morning, my children, when we separated, we were very sad, very sorrowful. . . Our hearts were broken with sorrow. . Well, I do not grieve for it now, my children. No, I do not repent that I made you so sorrowful. . . And if I had some regret at having plunged you for a little while into such keen sorrow, now I rejoice at it; not that you have been so sorrowful, oh, no. . . You know too much of my friendship and affection for you. . . You cannot believe that I should be made happy by your groans and your tears. . . You cannot even doubt that what caused your grief also caused mine, and that I have indeed had a share in your grief. . . I do not then rejoice because you have been grieved. . . I rejoice, my dear children, because your sorrow, because your tears have obtained for you the pardon of your sins, and the grace and mercy of God. . . Ah! my children, you yourselves will one day remember with joy the bitter tears you have shed this morning. . . And now, when you look so happy, so satisfied. . . It is because this morning you wept over your sins. . . I should like, this evening, to let you sing the beautiful hymn, '*Mon bien-aimé ne paraît pas encore,*' but we are not all yet fit for this indulgence, we have not all received absolution, we are scarcely yet fervent enough. . . You can say it, or sing it, and meditate upon it at home this evening, that it may carry you on to the love of our Lord, and perhaps you will find your eyes moist while you are singing it. . ."

When these beautiful hymns have been sung, and the Catechist has thus poured out his heart to the children, then is the time for giving, gently and quietly, but with precision and clearness, the last Admonitions for the evening and the next day; on their dress, the blessing they are to ask for from their parents, the way to employ the last hours of the evening, on going to rest on the eve of a first Communion, on the dawn of this great day, on getting themselves ready, on punctuality in coming to the Church, on finishing up their note-books of Retreat, and the need of writing them simply and truly, so that they may keep them always as perpetual remembrances of all the impressions of these great days. The children listen to all these details with a quiet attention and calm happiness, which sometimes becomes almost like sweet and charming gaiety. They are quite disposed for it, and the least smile from the Head Catechist makes them beaming;

they have been so seriously occupied and so restrained during the Retreat, and moreover their heart is so at ease and so happy, that they are easily overcome with joy, and this joy is heavenly.

It was just at this point, gentlemen, with the object of opening their heart and delighting them in a pious way, that I told them the following allegory, which I called a dream. I give it to you here, simply as an example of what may be attempted at this moment of the Retreat; I said to them:

"It often happens to good children that they have charming dreams as their first Communion draws near. They think they are in heaven, in the midst of the Angels' songs, and in the bosom of Jesus Christ. For us, poor sinners, poor little Augustines, we are not worthy of such beautiful things. Still, I should like to compose for you a dream something like S. Augustine's, and quite *couleur de rose* for the coming night, so that your conversion may be like his; for, you know, S. Augustine had a charming and celebrated dream, of which he has told us himself in his works.

"Well then, I picture to myself that to-night, when you are asleep in the Lord, you will see a grand and beautiful lady coming to you, graceful and majestic, but also full of charm and sweetness. . . This is not Purity, who appeared to S. Augustine, but, remember, Piety. . . Through a light veil which covers her you see that her head is crowned with thorns of Calvary, but through the thorns you just catch sight of a crown of flowers—lilies, violets, *immortelles;* happy emblems of modesty, humility, and of undying virtue. On her hand is a dove, a sweet symbol again of purity, of innocence and holy love; her blue eyes are of heavenly sweetness, and glowing with holy fire. Her long white robe floats in the air. There is nothing of the world about her beautiful and touching appearance. Everything about her breathes simplicity, nobleness, and grandeur. A sweet smile is on her lips; an air of heaven, a divine grace in her whole countenance.

"All around her is an innumerable multitude. Women of all ages, all ranks; queens, villagers, young virgins and venerable widows, and also strong men, great geniuses, benefactors of the people; kings, shepherds, poor men. . . There is one banner even followed by very charming little boys and modest little girls. . . Everything about them bears the impress of joy, peace, and happiness.

"Dear children, is not this dream really all *couleur de rose?* But let us go on.

"I picture to myself that this beautiful lady, turning towards you, says to you with her gracious look, and an angelic sweetness, and a voice which will go straight to your heart:

"'My dear child, a great deal of evil has been said against me in the world; you think perhaps that I am dull, severe, unsociable, melancholy, and only fit for cloisters and deserts; that I cannot do without fasting and sackcloth. You are frightened by the Retreat, and you think I only speak of hell and death. Comfort yourself, my poor child, for I am only like a mother who cries out to frighten her child and make him come back from the edge of a precipice; but that will not last always. . . The beginnings of conversion are painful, but to faithful children the road becomes easier. Go on, my yoke is very easy, my burden very light. It is true that even faithful children have always to fight a little, but I fight with them, and I crown their victories.

"'You have perhaps seen in the world religious people who are disagreeable, haughty, proud, severe upon others, who neglect the duties of their station and the reform of their tempers for certain exterior acts of devotion. These

false religious people are hypocritical Pharisees, theirs is a Judaic devotion. Real religious people are gentle, humble, severe to themselves, and indulgent to others; faithful to all their duties, obedient, industrious, full of charity for the poor; they excite the admiration and force the esteem of even the irreligious, so lovable are they. Calmness is always in their face, grace in their heart; milk and honey flow from their lips, they are marked by a delightful cheerfulness which shows the peace and joy of their soul. Sometimes they may be humorous, like S. François de Sales, one of my most charming servants, who delighted to speak pleasantries. . . Their simple and sweet words penetrate all hearts, like the dew on the tender herb. . . Oh! never have unbelievers and worldlings been so happy as they. I have given them a precept to rejoice in the Lord, and I join myself in their games and in their laughter to make it all more pure, more gracious, more pleasant. Look at these children who surround me, do they look like victims? It is true, they detest dangerous pleasures and shows, but I allow them sweeter and more innocent recreations. . . They detest romances; but I allow them books which are much more amusing and more wholesome, where the charms of holy love are portrayed, instead of the impure fire of profane love. I forbid them immodest dress, but I charge myself with their clothing, and am delighted to clothe and adorn them with all the attractions of innocence. Their countenance is a beautiful mirror of a beautiful soul, and simplicity and modesty give them a quite heavenly beauty, which charms the angels and even men.

"'I forbid them to go into bad company, but I allow them the delights of Christian friendship. . . I give them more charming feasts than the world's feasts, and at the feet of Jesus Christ in the Holy Communion I make them, in one moment, enjoy a thousand times more pleasure than worldlings have ever enjoyed. Like yourselves, to-morrow, they would not change their place for a crown. I console them in their troubles by the sweetest hopes; in the midst of their tears even I give joy, their life is a foretaste of Paradise, and they have a hundred times less labour in saving themselves than worldlings take to destroy themselves.'

"I picture to myself that Piety, after this touching discourse, will show you a place marked out for you by her side, and will offer a crown and a palm to each of you. Will you go and take it? Will you go and fill this place? I cannot say, or rather, I am sure you will. But another thing I know well too, is that a great number of children of last year, children of the Easter Communion, whom I will not name, have become charming children, full of fervour, and adorned with all the gifts of heaven, because they responded to the touching invitations of Piety, and I know also that it only depends on yourselves to share their happiness!

"But, you will say, Purity and Piety are not beautiful ladies, they are virtues. . . Well, my children, since you are so particular, and are not satisfied with allegorical personages, let us imagine Piety, Purity, and all the most lovable virtues to be personified in the Blessed Virgin. . . You will not be displeased, I hope, by this charming sovereign, and let her add:

"'Poor little Augustine, poor little Magdalen, come to the arms of your mother! perhaps you are sorry that you have not, like S. Augustine, a holy Monica to pray for your conversion. Well, I myself, who love you much more, will pray for you; let me lead you to your Saviour, to peace, to the source of all delights, and let your life under my auspices pass in happiness and virtue, till you reach that throne all brilliant with glory, which is prepared for you in heaven.'

"But this is perhaps too beautiful a dream for poor sinners like us, my children; still I am not sorry that I have related it to you."

After this recital, or any other, and after all the details of this meeting, the rehearsal of the ceremonies of the next day

takes place in the Church; great care must be taken that no carelessness creeps into this exercise; there is a danger of it which it is important to avoid. Therefore everything should be done in a measured way, gravely, without hurry or fuss; all the directions should be given in good and distinct words, and with authority, though quite gently, and yet forcibly.

I need not explain why, in this rehearsal of the ceremonies, what was formerly called the *communion blanche* has been entirely and very rightly suppressed.

The children are then sent away with a few last tender words, and affectionate wishes for their happiness. In a certain way, these are the *novissima verba* of our Lord. These happy children feel something of what the Apostles must have experienced when listening to the last words our Saviour poured forth from His soul; they go home, carrying in their heart a delicious joy which no human tongue can express; they go to sleep in the evening with the holy thoughts which have inspired them; if they awake in the night, the words of their beautiful hymn come to their lips:

> "Mon bien-aimé ne paraît pas encore,
> Trop longue nuit dureras-tu toujours?"

And in the midst of these pious longings, and these hymns, comes the dawn—the dawn of the first Communion.

FOURTH DISCOURSE.

THE DAY OF THE FIRST COMMUNION.

I.

The great day then has come; and we have at last, gentlemen, reached this long-desired, long-expected end, this day of first Communion, which crowns all, both for your children and yourselves. After this week-day Catechism, after this Retreat, after this general Confession and all the toils of penitence, absolution is received; and now all are in favour with God, and worthy of the incomprehensible gift He has in store for them.

Thus, look at them, as they come to you this day with quite new faces, at once happy and serious, quite beaming with restrained, but deep joy. Yes, they are happy, there is no mistake about it, it is the sweetest reflection of happiness which is beaming in all these faces; and all this happiness comes from the depth of their soul, and from something higher than themselves. And why are they happy? because they are pure. It is not that all have preserved their innocence; some, alas! nearly all, have been more or less stained with evil; but something divine has passed over their soul, and everything has been blotted out; they are restored to goodness and virtue; they are good, and at this moment they have a horror of evil, of even the shadow of evil; their hearts are full of all the best feelings; they love God, they love their parents; everything on earth they ought to love, they love more tenderly than ever. But the grand, the really divine feature of a first Communion, is that they are going to receive their God; at their young age, twelve years, on the very threshold

of life, the beautiful and deep mystery of God finding again His creature, of the heavenly Father bringing back His children to Himself, is about to be accomplished in them. And the Lord taking possession of these young, purified, and renewed souls—no, gentlemen, there is nothing on this earth so grand or so charming! And thus, in the sight of all these children ranged round the Altar, in the calm joy of their faces, in their beaming looks, there is something which goes to the heart of even the indifferent; above all, the parents cannot be insensible to it; they do not take their eyes off them, and when at the end the children, having returned from the Holy Table, yet more pure and happy, come to offer their foreheads to be kissed, fathers and mothers really feel then that these children were never more worthy of God, never dearer to their own love.

And you, gentlemen, who have prepared for these holy things, who have been God's chosen instruments for the work of divine grace in these young hearts, who have prepared everything for this mysterious consecration of the first opening of their life in a mystery of happiness and innocence, your joy too is great on this day, and repays you over and above for all your anxieties and all your cares.

But you must not deceive yourselves, it is not only to rejoice and be happy that you come on this day of first Communion; it is a day of delightful labour, but it is labour still. However well prepared the children may be, they must always be helped, and more than ever at this decisive moment.

Just because their hearts are enlarged, there is a danger of distraction; at this age joy can very quickly turn into frivolity. So we must be on our guard.

Moreover, they are receiving much from God; but also, they ought to give Him back much, and on this point they have to be enlightened. In the happiness of a first Communion, there are, in fact, two different times, the morning and the evening. In the morning, God gives Himself wholly to His children; in the evening, they also, in their turn, give themselves anew and wholly to God. In the morning are the joys of Communion, in the evening the joy of the renewal of

Baptismal promises, the sermon for perseverance, and finally the happiness of the Consecration to the Blessed Virgin. Well! for all these things, and for all these reasons, a day of first Communion demands that the Catechists should be more exact and more attentive than ever; these timid and inexperienced, but softened, loving and docile hearts, must be guided; and for a watchful eye observing them, there is a peculiar charm in seeing how, on this blessed day, they respond to every word, and to all motions of grace; like a clear lake rippling with every breath of wind, according to a gracious figure in Holy Scripture, or to a beautiful field of ripe corn under the sickle of the reaper, according to another comparison in Holy Scripture. And thus innumerable anxieties and cares of all kinds devolve on the Catechists. They ought to think of everything, anticipate everything, rehearse everything in most exact detail, so that on no point should their young flock be left to themselves, without direction. It is for them a most anxious and at the same time most consoling occupation; it is the moment when more than ever they should be *mothers*.

Let us then, gentlemen, enter into exact and complete details of all that has to be done this day, by the Catechist. And what you should first of all understand is, that the thing itself is so great, that everything should be simple, calm, and natural, both in word and action.

II.

THE children are assembled in the morning at the Catechism Chapel, before taking them into the Church. The Catechists are the first to be there. The time then spent with them is delightful; but at the same time never is there more need of forethought and care in preparing the words one has to say to them. Many things of the last importance have to be told them, or repeated to them then. We begin by Admonitions as to the outward things, all that relates to order, carefulness of behaviour, the dignity of the ceremony: the procession, the solemn entrance into the Church, the certificates of Confession,

the offering, the veils, the candles, the *pain bénit*, the manner of going to the Holy Table and returning from it. Then they are told how they must pass the rest of the day so as not to lose the grace received in the morning, and all this clearly, briefly, and with decision. Then they may sing a few verses, perhaps, of that touching hymn, which at that moment is so true for themselves, and of which it is so easy to make a charming paraphrase :

"Troupe innocente
D'enfants chéris des cieux,
Dieu vous présente
Son festin précieux."

This hymn prepares them for the yet more important Admonitions which relate to their inward dispositions. Let the Director not forget that his words now have a decisive influence on the very fervour of the first Communion ; if I may borrow here the beautiful similitude of a Father of the Church, their souls, living instruments about to be touched by Jesus Christ, are brought up to the right pitch, so that when touched by the Divine Hand, they may give out their most harmonious sounds. It is not the time for any great lifting-up of the voice; a calm, gentle, impressive accent is the only right thing. It is the *ros in herbâ* of the holy writings. For this first visit of their God they need to be inspired with the most devout concentration of thought, with sweet and solid piety ; the more fervent they are, the more happy will they be, and the more grace they will reap for their whole life. Lively faith, profound adoration, humble fear, tender confidence, ardent desires,—all these feelings must be awakened in them. Your anxious foresight should go further yet, and be thoughtful for the scruples, the troubles which may arise in their soul ; and a very delicate but simple Admonition should be given upon forgotten sins, of such a nature that, though not quieting those who have made wilful omissions,—if there should be any such,—tender consciences should be re-assured. It is essential that they should come to the Holy Table with a quiet mind, in peaceful and joyful love. Up to the last moment, therefore, if there is a real desire for it, you must

listen to them kindly, and if need be, take them to their Confessor. Then they must be spoken to on the Act of Thanksgiving, and you must make them well understand the happiness of this supremely precious moment, when God is present in their soul, when they enjoy Him, speak to Him, and when they may hear Him speak with inexpressible sweetness. As far as may be, for this incomparable time, the things they will have to say to God should be suggested to them.

When at last everything has been said, and the moment for departure has arrived, with a few vivid and touching words they must be sent to the Saviour Who is claiming them :

"Go, my children, the time is come ; let us depart. . . The eye of heaven is upon you, and Jesus Christ is awaiting you ; let us go. . . Oh ! now gather up all the power of your soul . . . have not a thought for earth. . . Open, open your hearts, enlarge them without measure . . . desire ardently . . . love, if you can, without measure . . . love, peace, joy, confidence, deep humility, lively faith, ardent longing ; open your heart to all these sentiments at once. . . I will keep you no longer from your happiness. . . Jesus Christ from His tabernacle reproaches me with delaying your joy . . . Go then, fly to the arms of your Saviour. . . Oh ! yes, I may well say to you, children of God, go to heaven ! "

Then at the given signal, they rise and set out.

III.

And how beautiful it is to see them, as triumphantly, but piously and modestly, they walk towards the Church ! How sweet to see them in the sanctuary, in their festal clothing, these white ribbons, these dresses which in their brightness and simplicity make them look like angels, with their happy, radiant faces, and all singing their hymns with delight !

But still, gentlemen, there is needed here a great deal of watching and constant attention on the part of the Catechists. I need hardly say that at this solemn hour, when the Catechists as well as the children are a spectacle to God and to men, they must not be behind them, either in modesty or devotion. Thus, however pressed they may be, they will be careful to walk with gravity, to make their genuflexions

before the Blessed Sacrament carefully; only to speak from necessity and in a low voice, keeping their face towards the Altar, so that it will hardly be observed. Throughout, they must be quite calm and collected, and in the midst of small disturbances they must necessarily encounter, they must maintain an invariable tranquillity, avoiding the slightest hurry. No too hasty gesture or movement; they should avoid stooping down too much to the children, or touching the little girls, even with the biretta; as far as possible they should maintain a sort of immovable gravity, although this external concentration must not prevent their keeping a watchful eye on everything, both during the Mass, and during the Act of Thanksgiving.

The most beautiful hymns are sung during the Mass, as far as the *Sanctus;* the singing must be well sustained, and be as animated as possible. After the Elevation, the recitation of the Acts which precede the Communion is begun with a clear and audible voice, but yet with a devout and impressive accent. It is very important that the children shall have learnt these acts by heart, and later on, at the renewing of the first Communion, it will be well to make certain that they are well rooted in their memory; and with this object care should be taken beforehand to choose formulas which are very devout, and also very short. And now has come the supreme moment of Communion. The signal is given, and they go forward, led by their Catechists; some with bowed head, and deeply absorbed; others looking towards the Altar; all with something angelic in their countenance; they communicate, then they return, looking even more deeply impressed than before, having God in their heart. Nothing can be more touching than this sight, if—and this is of special importance—if the movement to and fro, led by the Catechists, is carried out with becoming order. But as the ceremony in large parishes is somewhat long, it is very important to watch well over the children who have been the first to communicate, to keep up their attention, to help them in their Acts of Thanksgiving, either by pointing them out to them, or recalling them to attention by a few whispered words, for instance: "My children, keep

up your attention, say the Acts after Communion carefully . . . pray with all your heart."

And in this moment, what graces have I seen showered on all these souls by the good God! How good it was then to rest one's eyes on these dear children! to see their emotion, their tears, the love of God shining in all their countenances, sometimes their sighs and ardent longings, God making Himself known to them, every heart breathless, and as it were transformed into sublime beauty.

The Mass, called that of Thanksgiving, follows the Mass of Communion; it must never be left out, or there would be the risk of leaving unfinished the impression which the first Communion ought to produce. Before receiving their God, recollected and touched, the children sang with a sort of restrained ardour; but at the Mass of Thanksgiving, with indescribable enthusiasm they sing these hymns which are so fitting for this blessed time!

I still remember the sort of electric feeling which seemed to go through the Church, as if every soul had received a flash from above, when they began to sing:

"Chantons, en ce jour,
Jésus et sa tendresse extrême."

And then:

"Qu'ils sont aimés, grand Dieu, tes tabernacles!"

And they sang these beautiful hymns all together and in delightful accord, as if there were but one single voice, one single heart, one single soul.

To any one who yielded himself to the impressions of this morning, the sanctifying Spirit seemed to descend here, and as it were to hover over these children, filling them with His divine influences. What one saw was no longer belonging to earth, it was something of heaven.

After the Mass of Thanksgiving, when everything is finished, the Catechists lead back the children in procession; the parents, having had notice beforehand, go out of the Church and wait before the door, under the *péristyle;* and the children throw themselves into their arms.

As to the Catechists, they go back into the Church, and in the sanctuary, now solitary, but sweet with the odours of Heaven, they fall on their knees at the feet of the Blessed Sacrament, giving thanks. They have nothing now to do but to bless God.

IV.

THE EVENING.

And in the evening we meet these dear children again. How happy we are to see them, how happy they are themselves to be again in their holy Chapel! But still, gentlemen, I must again say, it is most necessary that there should be redoubled watchfulness on the part of the Catechists. The children, excited with the morning, their heart quite dilated with joy, and moreover having no longer this great thought before them of a first Communion to be made, may easily, if one is not very careful, fall into a careless state, which though it may be excusable, is none the less disastrous.

Before taking them into the Church, we cannot help saying a few words to them. And what a moment to speak to them, if one has but a little heart and devotion! We can greet them, gentlemen, almost as follows:

"I am constrained, my dear children, to ask you if we deceived you, when we told you that the day of your first Communion would be the most beautiful, the most happy of all the days of your life? Ah! you feel it to be so now! You felt it this morning, when you possessed the Beloved of your hearts, when He was all your own! what feelings of delight in your inmost soul! what tears in that happy moment when your hearts had become the sanctuary of the King of glory. Then '*le ciel entier, le ciel était dans votre cœur*'; you experienced the sweet truth of the words:

'Qu'ils sont aimés, grand Dieu, tes tabernacles!
Qu'ils sont aimés et chéris de mon cœur!'

Ah! one single day, one single morning thus spent, O my God, at Thy feet, at the foot of Thine altar, under the shadow of Thy wings, '*vant mieux qu'un siècle*' in the tents of sinners! . . . '*Autour de vous les anges en silence, d'un Dieu caché contemplaient la splendeur*' . . . And you, in the midst of the joy, the deep peace, the perfect happiness which filled

your hearts, you said, '*Anéantis en sa sainte présence, ô Chérubins, enviez mon bonheur!*' . . . We did not deceive you then, my dear children, the morning of your most beautiful day has passed, and after so pure a morning the evening will not be sad! You will only have one regret to-day . . . and that is that this beautiful day will come to an end, that it will not last for always. . . Oh! you feel it now, how worthy to be loved is this good Saviour! what will it be then when by a long course of faithfulness you have deserved His love?

"For my own part, my good children, I may be deceived, but it seems to me that I love you even better than I have ever loved you. . . I delight to look upon you. . . Ah! indeed, now it is that you are truly our joy, our crown and our glory. . . What happiness if we find ourselves all together in heaven, as we are here! Oh! we shall be happier still . . . and the happiness there will have no end, for 'the happiness of heaven,' as a child has written, 'must be like a first Communion which never ends!' . . . Assuredly . . . you would gladly make a covenant with the good God to be all your life as happy as you are at this moment . . . what calm, what joy in the depth of your hearts; you are at peace with all the world. . . Never have your parents been so tender towards you . . . never even have your mothers shown you such love . . . but this joy, is it not true that it is unlike any joys you have hitherto had. . . How pure, how sweet it is! As Fénélon has said, it is a joy which has something blessed and heavenly about it. It is a joy which is always pure and equal, and which nothing exhausts. The more you plunge in it, the sweeter it is . . . it charms the soul without disturbing it. . . Something divine, which I cannot describe, is continually going through your hearts. . . You know, you taste that you are happy, you feel that it only depends on yourself to be so always . . . and to complete the likeness to heaven, this same joy which you all partake of, takes all your voices and all your hearts, and makes of them but one voice, one thought, one heart, so to sing altogether, in pious transport, the praises of God Who fills you with blessings."

After these words, or others, and the Admonitions necessary for the ceremony which is about to follow, they are conducted, always in procession, to the Church.

We have, as you know, gentlemen, a grand opening hymn for this occasion:

"Célébrons ce grand jour par des chants d'allégresse."[1]

It is indeed a masterpiece, worthy of the genius and piety of the great Racine. The children always sing this hymn

[1] M. Borderies was the author of this hymn; he composed it for the Sainte-Chapelle; hence the refrain:

"Chantons *sous cette voute antique. . .*"

with real enthusiasm. Then M. le Curé solemnly intones the Little Vespers. After the *Magnificat*, the Preacher goes into the pulpit, and preaches the sermon which is to prepare the children for the renewal of the promises of Baptism. In some parishes, it is the custom for this renewal to be recited by a child; but, in our opinion, it takes away a great deal from the effect it ought to produce. It is much better that the questions should be put and addressed to the children from the pulpit: "Do you believe in Jesus Christ? . . . Do you renounce the devil? . . . To whom do you wish to belong?" They answer all together with wonderful energy: "I do renounce him . . . to Jesus Christ . . . for ever!"

Before the sermon the following hymn is sung:

"Quand l'eau sainte du baptême."

And afterwards:

"J'engageai ma promesse au baptême."

The children afterwards receive the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and the presence of Jesus Christ on the Altar recalls to them in the evening the happiness of the morning. After the Benediction, they go in procession, accompanied by the singing of litanies, to the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin, there to make their solemn consecration; a pious discourse, shorter than the sermon, is again addressed to the children. Then one of them, generally a girl, recites the formula of Consecration, which should be animated and touching. Then the beautiful hymn is sung:

"Vous qu'en ces lieux combla de ses bienfaits,
Une mère auguste et cherie."

Then the children are again conducted in procession to the *péristyle* of the Church; then their parents receive them, and all these happy families go home praising God. Thus ends the ceremony, and thus finishes this blessed day.[1]

[1] Before leaving, some Catechists are in the habit (and if the number of the first Communion is small, it can be done without difficulty) of bringing back the procession into the nave, and addressing yet a few last words to the children, gathering up the impressions and the recollections of this day, and giving back the children solemnly to their parents. M. Borderies, in particular, used to do this, and never had his words more

I have described, gentlemen, the first Communion as carried out in towns, with resources which are not to be had everywhere, and it is now needless to repeat that I do not mean that all these things should be done in their entirety and in the same way in all parishes: but nevertheless I do maintain, and I shall devote a special discourse to this subject, that nothing essential of what I have described ought to be omitted anywhere; that it is only in the details that any needful modifications can or ought to be made, the substance and groundwork being left unaltered, and finally that nearly all this can be done everywhere, provided that you have at heart love for the children, and zeal for souls: love and zeal, these, gentlemen, are the grand masters, inspiration comes from these. Without love and zeal, the work can be done, gentlemen, but how? With what coldness and negligence! What imperfections, what omissions! how many details left out! how many resources wanting! how many means not tried! With zeal and love, on the contrary, nothing is a difficulty, nothing wearies, everything is thought of, tried, kept up; one industry succeeds to another; for zeal, gentlemen, is industrious, fertile, inventive, patient, indefatigable; it does not fear trouble, or rather, it loves trouble, it is happy in taking trouble: "*Ubi amatur, non laboratur, aut si laboratur, labor amatur.*" They are S. Augustine's words, and they explain everything.

Then, at the cost of a thousand efforts, no doubt, but which will certainly be fully rewarded, there will be comforting first Communions, heavenly first Communions; first Communions, gentlemen, such as I have described, which convert the children, which give them back to God, which bring

power than on this occasion; all who remember that time, speak of it. It was one of the most striking scenes in his Catechism. "Our ministry is ended," he said to the parents; "yours begins. . . What were these children, when you brought them here to us? Giddy, idle, ignorant of prayer, of their duties towards God, and towards yourselves: and what are they now? . . . We give them back to you pure and innocent, full of respect, obedience and love to yourselves, reconciled with their heavenly Father. . . Do you, in your turn, watch over this sacred trust, of which God will demand an account from you! . . . Watch and pray. . . We shall not cease to pray and to watch with you. . ."

heaven into their heart, which ensure them a Christian life. Then only will the work of God be done, which is a fruitful work, a wonderful work; and on the other hand, it will not even have been begun, and the failure will be all the more disastrous because the work itself was so beautiful so easy, and so necessary!

FIFTH DISCOURSE.

THE LAST DAY.

The first Communion having been made, and well made, the end is attained, the road along which the children and their Catechists were to travel together is passed, the week-day Catechism is finished; it only remains for them to separate.[1]

But that is not so simple as it seems, gentlemen; when the time comes, every heart is full of deep and tender feeling, and this last meeting for separation must be in accord.

These children have been in the habit, which seemed at first severe, then sweet, and which finally became to them most delightful, of meeting each other twice or three times a week; then twice every day, in the solemn days of the Retreat; then the whole day of first Communion in heavenly joy, and

[1] There are parishes where Confirmation closely follows the first Communion. If it is on the same day, or on the next day, it seems to us, in general, much to be regretted; the preparations for these two Sacraments cannot be kept sufficiently distinct, and there is a risk of the children confusing everything, and understanding nothing rightly. But seven or eight days afterwards is quite another thing; the special preparation for Confirmation is then possible, and this week, during which we see the children every day, in the midst of the special Instructions for the new Sacrament which the children are waiting for, may keep up with great ease and great profit the joy and fervour of their first Communion. One can there explain to them at leisure the rule of life, can dwell on certain important pious habits; and in general, enlarge on all the means for perseverance; this is excellent.

Still, the Bishop only visiting parishes every four or five years, it more often happens that the Confirmation does not take place for one or more years after the first Communion; and then the preparation for Confirmation has quite another character, and should be looked upon as one of the means of perseverance. Therefore we shall treat of it separately, when we come to speak on perseverance, and the Catechisms of Perseverance.

perhaps also the day of Confirmation; all that is just at an end, every one is going back to their ordinary life, all this little family of God's children, all these cherished lambs, gathered in the fold of the Good Shepherd, are about to be dispersed; there only remains one Mass of Thanksgiving, and then one meeting, which is the last, of the week-day Catechism, where the last Admonitions are given, the last farewells said.

You will see that this cannot be an ordinary gathering, and like all others; both the children and the Catechist feel in their heart a secret but overpowering necessity of being together one last time, and for this reason it often happens that this meeting leaves perhaps the deepest and most undying impression of the whole Catechism.

If, gentlemen, we love the children as we ought to love them, if we have known how to make them love us as they also ought to do, not certainly for ourselves, but for the sake of God and their own soul; if we have laboured to gain for them all the good things which accompany a first Communion; when thus, in the supernatural order of things, we have been the first, the greatest benefactor they will ever have on earth, we cannot part from them as if we were strangers and never to meet again; we must meet them at least once more; we have something to say to them, some last remembrance to leave with them.

Yes, when the children have become so attached to their Catechism, to their Chapel, to each other, and with that true family affection of which, gentlemen, I have said so much, and which you must now fully understand; and when these strong and sweet ties must be broken, and the time is come to part, it is sad, and the heart demands that at least these last moments shall be marked by something which will last, some remembrance both sweet and sad, but indelible.

As you know, when our Lord was on the point of leaving His Apostles, He did not part from them without one last pouring out of His soul into theirs, without those blessed words for the instruction of Christians, of which the beloved disciple desired that not one should be lost. And before

ascending into Heaven, He again gave them His last words.

We see Him, in those wonderful discourses at the Last Supper, as if, so to speak, He could not make up His mind to part from His dear disciples, quite pre-occupied with that which would await them, when He should be no longer with them, and anxiously seeking to warn them against the dangers of the future. And, gentlemen, the same two-fold motive demands a last day of meeting after the first Communion, and after Confirmation, and as a close to the week-day Catechism. No doubt affection had its place in all the other meetings of the Catechism; but, during the special preparation for the Sacrament which they were going to receive, it did not stand alone; but in this last interview when special affection is shown to the children,—that high and holy affection which comes from the fatherhood of souls,—then above all, they feel that they are loved there, at the Catechism, as they will be loved nowhere else on earth, because they are loved for God's sake, for the sake of their soul, for the sake of their eternal happiness: and this feeling, besides leaving them an indelible remembrance of the Catechism, inspires them with the resolution to be faithful to it in constant perseverance, and with the desire to return to it, and again meet with the same tenderness, the same benefits, the same happiness.

Such, gentlemen, is the character of this last day, and if any one does not feel the need of it, or has not the inspiration for it, it is because he has not sufficiently learnt to love the children and to make them love him for God's sake; it is merely that indifference hides from the negligent, the dull, the careless Catechist, at this time and at many other times, all that is most deep in this delicate ministry of Catechising. Yes, gentlemen, it is impossible to leave without giving each other a last farewell; and not to feel the need and the sweetness of it, is not to appreciate either the family ties formed by the Catechism, nor the supernatural love of the Catechists for their children; these are holy sentiments, the purest and most elevated both of Christianity and supernatural fatherhood.

They are going to leave you, gentlemen, and to be exposed

to all the dangers you know so well. Ah! on their behalf I ask you to give them yet a last word, a last Admonition, a last prayer, a farewell which they will always remember!

Therefore, gentlemen, eight days after the first Communion, or perhaps the following Sunday, boys and girls are again gathered together; at Saint-Sulpice this Sunday is called *Perseverance Sunday*, because in fact the last Admonition on perseverance is given at the same time that we are making our last farewells.

The feast of the Ascension, when the first Communion has been the Thursday before, by its mingled character of joy and sorrow, our Lord's blessing His disciples and bidding them farewell, is also very suitable for this last gathering, where sometimes tenderest love is shown in the midst of deep sorrow.

Anxieties about perseverance are early felt, and by a sort of latent sadness, not yet pronounced, modify the joy and pleasure of the meeting. It is a natural and inevitable feeling, and it is in every heart. The day begins with a Mass of Thanksgiving; the hymns then sung express all that each is feeling, and all there is to be said:

"Jour heureux, sainte allegresse!
Jésus règne dans mon cœur!
Pourquoi donc, sombre tristesse,
Viens-tu troubler mon bonheur?"

"Yes," the Catechist can say, in commenting on this hymn, "yes, this is a happy day, and we may give ourselves up to holy joy, '*puisque Jésus règne dans nos cœurs.*' Still, like you, my children, I am sad, and I complain that '*une sombre tristesse vient troubler notre bonheur.*' Alas! my dear children, though I have lost all remembrance of past days, of those old days in which, by sin, you were the slaves of the devil, I cannot wholly forget your carelessness, your weakness, your changeableness; and looking on beyond this happy day which is shining on us, and this holy refuge which guards us, I hardly know why, but a thousand painful fears rise up in my soul.

"'Hélas! de mon inconstance
J'ai l'affligeant souvenir,
Et pour ma persévérance,
Je redoute l'avenir!'"

Then the Catechist continues in the same strain, recalling all the recollections of the Catechism, warning of the perils of the future, the snares of the world and of Satan; speaking of fallings-away, of grievous, and alas! of such frequent apostasies, exhorting the children, in the name of their own love for them, of the benefits of our Lord, and of the holy joys of the first Communion, to remain for ever faithful, to persevere; the most affectionate, and the most pathetic expressions come in here naturally, and after all that the children have already seen and felt, there is perhaps no time more favourable for touching them and moving them to the depths of their soul.

After the Mass of Thanksgiving the *cachets* are given; it is the special *souvenir* of the first Communion and Confirmation, and the *souvenir* also contains a lesson. The custom of these *cachets* or *images* of the first Communion is common enough in Catechisms; but everything depends, gentlemen, on the way in which they are given. They may be given in the most interesting and touching way, by simply and affectionately explaining the beautiful emblems and inscriptions with which they are generally ornamented. On ours, at the Madeleine, we had our first Communion very closely represented, and we delighted the children when we gave them as made expressly for them, as the very representation of their first Communion: "You are there," we said to them, "it is yourselves, we can recognize you easily . . . we are there too. See, you are arranged as on last Thursday. . . These *cachets* have been made by an engraver who has the singular talent of making his figures represent five or six different faces. . . I recognize you all. Oh! yes, indeed, that is you . . . it is the very moment of Communion. . . The first row, after having communicated, is coming back, and all these children are walking slowly . . . their eyes on the ground . . . their heart plunged in adoration and love . . . the second row are at the Holy Table . . . and the third are advancing, with joy and trembling, towards the holy Altar . . . and all the others are in their place, waiting and longing . . . all devout, all recollected, and as still as the representations of them.

"But what are these emblems? Two birds on either side of the Altar. . . A pelican, who feeds her children with her own blood . . . and the bird of Immortality, called the Phœnix, who comes to life again from her own ashes. On the Altar itself a lamb, and all around, angels. . . Help me to understand. . . And what are these mottoes? . . . I read, '*Happy is he who has it, and knows how to keep it!*' Again I read, '*A precious souvenir, if you are faithful.*'" And the explanation of these emblems and mottoes furnishes an easy and plentiful theme for all manner of good developments. This explanation and distribution of *cachets* may be made very impressive, and may leave a sweet and lively remembrance of the first Communion in the children's hearts.

Then we leave the Chapel, all with more or less emotion; sadness has not yet come, but we are beginning to feel it.

In the evening all come to the Chapel with real sadness weighing on their heart; they know they will come there no more; it is the last time that all will be together. How precious those moments are! One would wish them never to end.

In the evening the *Billets* are explained, and the last farewells given.

The *Billets* are explained after prayers, and are as follows:

What is perseverance?

What are the motives which make perseverance a sacred duty for you?

Do you think it is easy to persevere while living in the world?

Ought a Christian child to be afraid of the hindrances to his perseverance which he will meet with in the world?

What means do you propose to use to make sure of your perseverance?

The explanation of these *Billets* should be short, and must be prepared with the greatest care; very gentle, but very serious words.

Then come the Little Vespers, which the children sing most devoutly.

After Vespers, there is a short sermon on their coming to the Catechism of Perseverance. I remember to have heard a

young Catechist make a very touching discourse on this text, which was indeed well chosen: *Vos enutrivi cum jucunditate, dimisi cum fletu et luctu, reducet autem vos mihi Dominus cum gaudio et jucunditate.*[1] "With joy did I nourish you. . . I sent you out with mourning and weeping; but God will give you to me again with joy and gladness."

Then comes the *Salut*, the last Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and then the separation.

I am bound to say, gentlemen, that not in the whole week-day Catechism, not even on the day of first Communion, have I seen anything to compare with what is felt at this gathering. . . One's whole heart opens there . . . it is the time of the last affectionate intercourse, the last advice to the children, the last prayers to God . . . the farewells.

Then, more than ever, by the very tone of voice, the expression of the countenance, by everything we remind them of, by the advice we give them, the dangers we warn them of, by the tender anxiety and foresight, by the evident grief of heart at this last hour, the children feel that these are really fathers, who with sorrow and trembling are parting from the children of their zeal; they feel that in this Catechism, in this cradle of their soul and their faith, they have found a peculiar, incomparable love, a love which is like no other on this earth, coming from a higher source than the heart of their Catechists; coming from the very heart of our Lord Jesus Christ. And then they feel that they too ought to share these anxieties, and that nothing is so much to be feared for themselves in the future as unfaithfulness to the God of their first Communion, nothing so sacred as their perseverance in loving and serving Him.

And, gentlemen, at this farewell gathering, this is always what I have seen; this has been the deep feeling in every soul. The happiness of the Catechism recalled by a last proof of tenderness, the grief of parting, the anxieties for the future, the desire for perseverance, the resolution to come back that they may again be happy and faithful, all this produces an over-mastering impression in every heart, betraying itself by

[1] Baruch iv. 11, 23.

tears, and sometimes even by irrepressible sobs, so that at the end of the meeting the children will hardly go away; and persons have sometimes said there is really but one fault to find with the Catechism, that on certain days the children seem to love their Catechism more than their family. No, gentlemen, it was not so, it would not be so; but the truth is, the Catechism had really become like another family to the children, and they could not leave it without grief of heart, as when one leaves one's own dear family.

Read, gentlemen, the farewell hymn; all these feelings come out in it. I know no more touching poetry, nor, under the circumstances, more sublime; it is one of the simplest, and at the same time one of the deepest inspirations of the heart; and yet, as I have already mentioned, this hymn was not composed by a Catechist, but by a child, a child full of the Catechism, rendering simply and truly all he felt, and all which others felt with him. Read this hymn, gentlemen:

"Dieu, qui formas nos cœurs dociles," &c.

Imagine it sung to the touching and well-known air of the popular verses of M. de Chateaubriand:

"Combien j'ai douce souvenance!"

Picture to yourselves all these children, touched by the farewells they have just heard, touched by this poetry which moves them yet more, touched by their recollections, by their regrets, by their fears, and tell me, gentlemen, if all this labour of the week-day Catechism could be better concluded than by this hymn and by these tears.

I feel myself the tears starting to my eyes at the image of those scenes I have been describing to you, which remain the most indelible, as well as the sweetest recollections of my life. Yes, the sweetest, for my conscience tells me that by no other ministry can so much good be done to souls as by this admirable ministry of the Catechism; and now, when my gray hairs and advancing years bring me solemn warnings, now, if anything consoles me, and gives me good hope, it is, gentlemen, the recollections of the first Communions which I have helped to make.

We carried on the Catechism in Paris in very difficult times, gentlemen; at that deplorable period of the Revolution of 1830, when impiety, and the most hostile impiety, had broken out, as you know. This circumstance, while giving us only too well-grounded reasons for our fears for our children's perseverance, made it our duty to warn them in a quite special manner, and to speak words to them which could not in these days be reproduced without a different colouring, but which then, I remember, touched the children greatly. After the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, my last words were as follows:

"My children, now that our Lord has blessed us for the last time all together, it only remains for us to part. It is painful, I feel it so, having been accustomed to the pleasure of seeing each other nearly every day, and having come to love each other tenderly; it is painful to part, hardly ever to meet again, or at least very seldom; but still God wills it, and since He demands of us this sad separation, He is well able to soften the bitterness of it.

"Adieu, then, my dear children! Above all, adieu to you, pious, faithful children, our sweetest consolation, the blessed compensation for all our labour; you who are now our dearest hope, and will be always our most sweet remembrance! No, I can never forget all that God has done for you, your gratitude, your tears of emotion and love; your holy transports, your sighs at the feet of Jesus Christ. And no doubt you also will hardly forget His goodness, His attractions, His tender love, His abundant gifts.

"Adieu also to you, careless children, you who long grieved us by your indifference, your idleness, and, it must be said, by your hardness. But no! Why speak of it? we have forgotten it, and we shall only remember your repentance, your tears, your fervour! And you also will remember the mercies of your God, His clemency, His gentleness, His extreme indulgence.

"Adieu to you all! Leave now this shelter, which has been the witness of the growth and education of your early years in innocence and happiness. Leave this Altar, which has been the depository of your first vows. Turn from the sight of this Holy Table, where your first tears of joy were shed. Return, for the time is come, to the bosom of your families. Take with you the lovable virtues which we have taught you to practise in this dear home. Grow and increase in the eyes of your parents, grow and increase in the eyes of your God, and be beloved by Heaven and earth.

"Ah! when we see you go from us, we cannot be without fears; more than one sad thought comes to trouble our heart. It makes us tremble to think you are going into a world which loves not virtue. Oh, my children, you have been brought up away from it, you do not know this

world! You do not know how false it is; it is an enchanter who will tell you deceitful things. Perhaps it will persuade you; all that up till now you have learned to fear, the world does not fear; all that you have learnt to reverence and cherish, the world despises and hates.

"It will paint virtue under repulsive colours; and leading you on from one snare to another from one pitfall to another, perhaps it will stain your sweet purity, and at last will make you betray your faith, and grievously offend your God. Alas! it has stained and corrupted so many.

"It will tell you that piety is sad, morose, austere. Oh, my children! you will be able to reply that the best days of your life were those which were spent under the dominion of piety; that if your heart has ever felt pure joys, it was piety which made you feel them; that when your eyes have shed tears of happiness, it was piety which caused you to shed them.

"It will tell you that religion, this holy religion, the comfort of all the sorrowful, the refuge of all who mourn, which has remedies for all wounds, which can soften every pain—it will tell you that it has no compassion, no pity, and no love.

"Oh! you will be able to reply: We are very young still; we have not lived long, and we do not understand your language; we only know that hardly had we ceased to be infants, when religion gathered us to her bosom, pressed us to her heart; she nourished us with her milk, she helped us to make our first steps, she made us grow and increase. Later on she admitted us to her holy solemnities, gave us the kiss of peace, and truly happy was the day when for the first time she made us sit at the Table of Angels. Oh, no! religion is not what you say. You do not know it.

"They will tell you (for what will they not hear?)—they will tell you that the ministers of religion are hard and severe, that words of threatening are ever on their lips, and that their heart is never touched.

"Oh! you will be able to say (I venture to say so, and it is in my own heart that I find the answer which I suppose you to give), We are very young, we have not known many ministers of religion, but those we have known were not at all what you say; their heart was not hard; they loved us, and when they were obliged to take leave of us, they shed many tears.

"At length, my dear children, we must conclude, we must part; it is sad, but it will not be for always. And besides, life is so rapid, it flows on like a stream; already heaven is opening over our heads, already eternity is drawing near to receive us. Oh blessed eternity, when will it be given to us to rest in thy bosom! Then we shall have nothing to fear, no cloud, no sorrowful separation.

"Adieu, then, my dear children! Oh! I trust that the world will not deceive you; and though I tremble for your future, I love to remember that we have confided you to a tender and powerful protectress. And now let us all cast ourselves at her feet, and say that prayer again which is so dear to her.

"Remember, O compassionate Virgin Mary, remember that we have never heard that any one of those who have sought your protection, who have implored your assistance, and have cast themselves into the arms of your mercy, has been forsaken. Animated with such confidence, we come to you, O Virgin of virgins, our Mother. Turn now your most tender and merciful eyes upon us; remember that all these dear children are your own, that we consecrated them to you on that happy day of their first Communion; remember that Jesus, your Divine Son, has bought them with His blood, nourished them with His flesh, warmed them with His love. Remember also with what heart they have sung your praises, invoked your name, proclaimed your benefits; remember, also, if need be, our own desires, our labours, our tears, our ardent prayers. Suffer them not to perish, or rather forget everything else, remember only their misery and your mercy, their dangers and your power, their trust in you and your love for them; and since it has never been known that any one has been forsaken who has had recourse to your protection, implored your assistance, and cast himself into the arms of your mercy, do not reject, O Mary, Mother of the Word, and our Mother, do not reject our humble prayers, but deign to hear and answer them! . . ."

SIXTH DISCOURSE.

THE FIRST COMMUNION IN THE COUNTRY.

I KNOW well, gentlemen, and I can quite understand that the impressions and even the emotions which you may have felt during our discourses on the week-day Catechism and the first Communion, may have also raised more than one doubt, more than one question in your minds; and now you are disposed to say to me: But this preparation for the first Communion, admirable as it is, and just because it is so admirable, is it possible in the country, or rather does not all we have just heard apply only to the towns?

This, gentlemen, is the very important point which we are now about to examine.

I answer without hesitation, that except a few simple modifications, quite easy to make, the Catechism preparatory to the first Communion can and ought to be carried out in the country quite as well as in the towns.

By this I mean, that a living, pastoral, deep work must be brought to bear on the souls of children, everywhere and always, to prepare them for their first Communion, and that without this influence, which is altogether apostolic, there can be no real preparation for this great and holy thing.

I mean that the preparatory Catechism can and ought to be carried out in the country as in the town, not only with the same mind, the same zeal, the same heart; for this is obvious. But also with the same rule, the same principal exercises, Admonitions, *bons points*, Instructions; the same great divisions, the same succession of events, and of impressions on the

children; in short, the same object, the same means, and the same results.

No doubt, the week-day Catechism, conceived and carried out as we have described, does present special difficulties in the country; but, on the other hand, these are compensated for by special advantages, as you will see; and moreover, when we come to details, it will not be difficult for me to show you, gentlemen, and to prove to you, without any doubt, that every one who is zealous, will find at his disposition a multitude of resources and ingenuities, which can give as much interest, as much charm, and as much effect to the Catechism, to the Retreat, and to the first Communion in the country as in the town; and finally that he will be able to exercise, over the children who are being prepared, that same pastoral and apostolic influence which is the proper, the essential character of a week-day Catechism and a first Communion.

I.

It will be said: But in the country the children are fewer in number, they are less educated, they are of a coarser nature; how, with these ignorant and rough natures, can we employ the same ingenious, delicate methods which are the life of a Catechism in the towns?

Again, generally in the country, there are no Chapels for the Catechism; a dozen or twenty little children are lost in the large Church.

Then also the parents, who are as ignorant as their children, do not understand the necessity of a Catechism, it is only from some remains of custom that they send them to it, and they rather hinder than support the influence of their pastor.

And finally, in a rural parish, the Curé is alone, without any helpers. No mutual action, no goodwill comes to the help of his ministry; his single hand is weaving a tissue which every other hand is daily undoing.

These, gentlemen, are the special difficulties of this work in

the country. But do you know what zeal can do? These difficulties it makes use of; these hindrances are changed into blessings.

And what I now say is not a preconceived theory, without any possible application to the reality of things; I shall say nothing to you which is not *practical*, because all I am going to tell you has been *practised*. Since I have been in this diocese, that is to say, for nearly twenty-four years, I have been engaged with Catechisms, and I have had a very constant correspondence with some of you, on this important subject. Well, gentlemen, I am going to give you your own experiences.

You say, the children in the country are fewer in number. But, in the first place, you all feel that this is no reason for discouragement; and that a single soul is precious to the zealous heart of a good Priest, even as it is to the love of our Lord.

I go further: they are fewer in number; but the evident result of this is that you can work for them, care for them, so much the better, one by one, not neglecting or forgetting a single one; and this is an inestimable advantage; for children, as you know, hardly profit except by what we can do and say to them separately. It is the necessity and the misfortune of very large Catechisms, that the Catechists are obliged to carry on the work in a way which is too general, not special enough, and that however zealous they may be, they cannot give to each child the care which each child requires.[1] While you, in the country, with your handful of children, you have the powerful resource of individual influence; you can train them, you can instruct them much more in detail, you can multiply your questions and your Admonitions for each, you can reiterate your explanations, repeat them, vary them according to their different capacities, you can teach them to say their prayers,

[1] At this very time, as I write, I have staying with me, at La Chapelle, the head of one of the largest and most flourishing Catechisms in Paris; and last night, in talking to me of his ministry, he said, "The misfortune is, that our children are too numerous; we cannot know them and attend to them each one separately as we could wish, and as we ought to be able to do."

you can *hear their Confessions more often, which is an inestimable good;* in short, to each one you can give the care of a direct, personal preparation, which is of all preparations the best and the most effectual.

But, it is said further, these children are so rough, so ignorant! Do you believe then, gentlemen, that in the towns, and even in the most celebrated Catechisms in Paris, there are not poor, uneducated children, knowing nothing?

For myself, I remember that at the Catechism of the Madeleine, in that rich quarter, every year I had to clothe from sixty to eighty poor children for their first Communion, and out of these, thirty or forty could not read. And I have no hesitation in saying that our country children are less unruly and less corrupt than were these unfortunate children of the great city.

And moreover, do you suppose that religion cannot ennoble, cannot lift up these poor souls, or that there is no way of interesting them in religious things, and bringing the truths of the gospel to the level of their understanding?

It would also be a great mistake to think that it is only into a large Catechism that we can put energy and life, that only in such can we have hymns sung, *bons points* practised, exhortations given, stories related, little festival-days celebrated.

One year, in Paris, I had a week-day Catechism for only seven children. Well, everything was exactly the same as at the Chapelle S. Hyacinthe. There were the hymns, the *bons points*, the Admonitions, the reading of the Life of Decalogne, absolutely all the exercises of the week-day Catechism.

Only, the place where I held the Catechism I had transformed into a little Chapel; there was an altar, a crucifix, the image of the Blessed Virgin, some religious pictures, &c.

In fact, it is indispensable, that the place where the week-day Catechism is held should have something holy about it, which shall impress the children. But in a country Church you can do this as well and better than I could do it in a *salon.* Only it must be attended to, and a good shepherd will employ his greatest care about it. I have already told you what I think on this subject, and I beseech you, gentlemen, if

you are not yet fully convinced, if it has not become a practical thing to you, to read again what I have said in the eleventh discourse of the first book, on the Chapels of the Catechism.

II.

In the country, it is said again, the Curé is alone, and has no helpers. Is that quite so? Let us look into it.

On the contrary, I can see, in the country as everywhere, two kinds of helpers; it is indispensable to have helpers, but the co-operation of these it is quite possible, even easy to secure, if you really desire it; they are, the parents on the one hand, school-masters and mistresses on the other.

And first, the *parents*. These ought to be our prime helpers in the work of the Catechisms; for this purpose, it is true, we must first act upon them, but thank God, they are open on more sides than one to our influence. Yes, if we know how to apply ourselves to it, we have—as one of you has written to me—in the deep and lively interest which the parents, in the country and elsewhere, take in everything which closely concerns their children, we have a precious aid for our Catechisms.

In the meetings for the distribution of prizes, with the good Brothers of the Christian schools, or in other small schools, see in what numbers the fathers and mothers flock to them, attracted by the dialogues their children recite, and by the prizes they win! They rejoice to be there; they will sacrifice everything to get places. And when they hear their children's names called, when they see them crowned, they are happy. Could you not profit by this great attachment of the parents to their children, by the ardent desire they have to see them succeed, to grow up good, and to win honour, to obtain the co-operation of every family with regard to the Catechism of first Communion? With this object, what has to be done?

In the first place, some time before the opening of the Catechism of first Communion, the Curé, by consulting the parish registers, settles what children are of the right age to

be admitted;—and then, in the fortnight before the opening of the Catechism, he pays a visit to the father and mother of each child who has the right to be admitted. This visit will be very cordial, the Curé plainly showing all the interest he takes both in the child and his parents. He will talk of the qualities this child possesses, of what he has observed in his disposition, of the hopes which may be formed of him; he will speak also of the co-operation which the Pastor claims from the parents, in a work the importance of which, both for themselves and their child, he will strive to make them thoroughly understand; in this way, quite simply and easily, he can bring them to see the obligation they are under to send him regularly to the Instructions, and to holy Mass; also the watchfulness they can exercise over his conduct and his habits; and the good advice and good examples which they should give him.

I do not say that these visits are to be made without care and discretion; but I do say that as a general rule, gentlemen, you ought not to be afraid of being importunate, when you know that you have in your own heart, and carry with you into a family, peace, love, and disinterestedness. And, moreover, when the parents see that you are thinking of their children with real affection, that you are interested about them, it is impossible that they will not be touched by it; so also when the Catechism brings forward their young sons, their young daughters, shows them, distinguishes them, honours them, it is hard if at last they are not themselves attracted to it.

Gentlemen, let me say, we are often grieved at the small success of our ministry, and we look sadly at some neighbouring Priest, whose labours seem more blest by God than our own. But there is a cause for everything, and would it not be well for each to ask himself: Why do I do nothing in my parish, while my neighbours, my brethren, are reaping much fruit? What is the cause? Sometimes a mere trifle, some unpleasing feature in the character, a slight fault, really nothing to speak of; and yet this nothing is everything! One is perhaps too *brusque* with his parishioners, another has a certain human

respect, a certain timidity which hinders him in visiting them, in speaking to them; a deplorable weakness, quite fatal in a Priest who has the charge of souls! Sometimes this want of success arises from neglect, which shows little charity and little zeal; you do not go to see them at their homes, when they are in grief or trouble, nor on the occasion of some happy event, not even that of their children's first Communion, or their Confirmation; you do not know how to show them that you are in heart and truth, and not only officially, their Pastor and their friend.

Therefore, gentlemen, when the Catechisms preparatory to the first Communion are about to begin, you must visit your families; you must write down the address of each child, so as to be able to seek them out, if need be. You must know what they are and what they will become. Otherwise, you are not good shepherds, you do not run after the straying sheep.

I will only now recommend to you what one of yourselves has written to me:

"My idea is, that in the interest of the children, a Curé should make a pastoral round of their families, at the opening of the Catechism; then a fortnight before the first Communion; and also immediately after the first Communion, when every one, parents and children, are still under the vivid impression of this great day; and finally, about the time of the Assumption, when they should renew the first Communion."

Many among you, gentlemen, do all this and much more; your visits, as I know by the letters I have received, are yet more frequent; and not only do you go to visit the parents, but you so manage that they come themselves to you to talk of their children.

In one letter I asked the question: What relations have you with the parents with regard to the first Communion? and this was the answer:

"1. The day the Catechism opens, I beg the parents and masters, themselves to bring me their children and their young servants. And then, I make them promise to send them regularly, and to see that they all learn their lessons well.

"2. When I am very much pleased or very much displeased with a child, I always go myself to tell the parents of it.

"3. When the children are definitely received for the first Communion, I go to see the parents, in order to persuade them to come to the Sacraments with their children. *For many, this has been the means of their return to God.*

"4. On the evening of the day of first Communion, when they come to thank me, I make them promise to send their children to the Catechism of Perseverance."

Another Curé writes:

"I make a point of the parents bringing their children at the opening of the Catechisms. I use this opportunity to remind them of the best means for making their children succeed; and I show them that for them, these means are watchfulness and good example. Every time I have the opportunity of seeing them again, and I look out for this opportunity, I insist again on these two important points.

"When the time for the first Communion is approaching, I persuade them to come, before their children are admitted, to assure me of their good behaviour, and this at the same time *gives me the opportunity of exhorting them to come with their children to the Holy Table.*"

"We must often visit the parents," another writes to me, "and praise their children to them, if they deserve it; beg them to watch them well and see that they say their prayers regularly; turn to account their pride, making them anxious that their children shall answer well at the Catechism, and take a good place there; make them feel that fathers and mothers in bringing up their sons and daughters in a Christian manner, are really working for their true interest. . . *I press them also very earnestly to come with their children to the Holy Table.*"

This then is one point gained, gentlemen; to make the parents feel, by these constant communications, what interest one takes in their children; and to teach them, in these private and very friendly conversations, far better than by general words from the pulpit, what are the great advantages of the Catechism for all. But this again can be done much more easily in the country than in a large town, where the children are so numerous, and the parents so scattered, and far more difficult of approach in their dwellings than are the simple inhabitants of our villages.

III.

I SAID also, gentlemen, that in country parishes the Curé has another auxiliary, who can either help him very much by

his co-operation in the work of the Catechisms, or damage him very considerably by his opposition,—I speak of the *school-master*.

You know as well as I do, gentlemen, for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, we have to take upon ourselves certain duties, we have to adapt ourselves to circumstances, and to our relations with certain persons who are necessary to our work for good.

In your parishes, there is always, close at hand, a man who is in close relations with the parents and the children; and if he is good, enjoying a certain moral authority with them, and a very proper respect. Well! you ought to take this position into your reckoning, and as far as may be, to use every means to make this man an instrument for good. First of all, at any cost, you must prevent his being hostile; you must not, by your own fault, bring him to set up rival pretensions, and to use opposing influence. Therefore, take good care that he has no grievance to allege against you. Nothing is so terrible as a school-master whose interests have been interfered with, as is obvious; he will move heaven and earth to put an end to what he calls an injustice, and often he will find those who will take up his cause among the local authorities, the delegates of cantons, and elsewhere.

For example, in parishes where there is no school for adults, it is an excellent thing, and one that I strongly recommend to the Curés, to get together the young men during the long winter evenings, to give them good lectures, lessons in singing, and other things; great good may result from it. But here great discretion is necessary; it would be better sometimes to give up the good which one might effect by these gatherings, rather than expose oneself to the hostility and hatred which these attempts might provoke, in places where the school-master himself holds a school for adults; or rather one might arrange the meetings at the presbytery for the days when the master did not have his school open, as on Sunday. To say nothing of the underhand warfare which a discontented school-master can stir up in a parish against the Curé,—if a man, who is with the children from morning to night, is constantly

showing his dislike of the Pastor, if any good measures proposed by him he only adopts after resistance and with reluctance, the children will gradually and unconsciously imbibe the prejudices and the so-called grievances of the master with whom they live, and then all is lost.

Now, in general, gentlemen, it costs little to a kind-hearted Curé to win over his school-master, whose interest it is equally with his own to be on good terms, and in agreement; and one always sees the happiest results spring from this kindliness, specially in what concerns the Catechisms. A great many amongst you, gentlemen, who have shown kindness to your school-masters, and confidence in them, have been rewarded by the devotion and co-operation which these, in their turn, have offered you in every instance, and above all in watching over the children's study of the Catechism, and in preparing for the examinations, and for the Retreats of the first Communion.

And what I say of the masters applies equally to the mistresses.

Again, gentlemen, it is from yourselves I have learned all this. Thus one of you writes to me: "The master and mistress help me in every way. They keep watch over the children carefully during the Mass, and make them follow all the different parts in their books. . . "

One excellent way of procuring the more regular attendance of the children at the Offices, an attendance which in many parishes is very faulty, is the custom of what is called the *liste d'appel.* From this list the master calls the names of all the children; he notes down the absent ones, and on Monday he asks the reasons, and if necessary administers reproofs. You see how very useful a master who lives on good terms with his Curé can be in this way. In default of a master, or if his zeal cannot be reckoned on, the Curé should himself call over the names.

Another very important point, gentlemen, is to know if all the children who are of the age to follow the Catechisms are really doing so; this is easy with regard to the children who come to the school; for the rest, the Curés have but to consult the school-master, who is *obliged* every year to furnish the

Prefect with statistics of the children who do not attend the classes.

In certain parishes there exists, between the master and the Curé, what is called a *sheet of correspondence*. On this sheet of paper the Catechist marks down, not only the absences, but also the way in which the Catechism has been learnt. The master, for the following Catechism, sends back this sheet, having marked on it the length of time which the child has given to his study, and finally, how he has learnt his lesson.

On this subject let me quote to you the words of one of your zealous brethren :

"One means of emulation from which I have reaped very much fruit, consists in a little book, in which are written the names of all the children ; and against them the masters and mistresses record the marks they have deserved in class ; I use these notes as a subject for praise or blame, and try to make it profitable to all. Then I send back the little book, with the different marks for the Catechism, to the masters and mistresses, who again make the same use of it."

From another Curé I learn the following details :

"The master and mistress have each a paper, on which they note down the attendance at Mass and at Vespers, the recitation of the gospel, the behaviour during the Services, and whether the children have Office-books and the little Manual of the Catechism."

"On the first day in each month," another writes, "I ask for the list of the good and bad marks at the school ; I read it out publicly at the Catechism, with blame or encouragement. And twice a month they send me the marks of absences from the Office."

All this is excellent, but all this, obviously, supposes a perfect understanding between the Curé and the school-master.

By means of this understanding, it will be easy to arrange that the times for coming to school and leaving it shall be different for the boys and for the girls, the importance of which, from a moral point of view, is evident.

Shall I give you one more example? I know three amongst you, who in order to put life into their Catechisms, and to attract the parents to them, have conceived the admirable idea of from time to time bringing together the Catechisms of their three parishes, for the purpose of a grand and solemn

examination. The attempt, gentlemen (I will speak of it later on), was a wonderful success. But the Archdeacon, who presided at one of these examinations, speaks in his report of the valuable assistance which these gentlemen had received from their three school-masters. "And," adds the Archdeacon, "they could reckon on this co-operation, by reason of the great kindness with which they always treated them."

There is one point above all, of supreme importance, in which the master and mistress can be a very great help to you—I allude to the Retreat of first Communion, which, thank God, you all bring your children with so much zeal to take part in. On this subject one of you writes to me:

"The Retreat lasts three whole days. There are three exercises every day. . . Between the exercises, the children are assembled in their respective schools, and their masters and mistresses read pious books to them, suggest to them good resolutions, help them in writing their Retreat note-books, make them sing hymns, in fact keep them as far as possible from any distraction."

Can anything be imagined better, or more useful? I can now show you the other side of this picture: the regrets which other Curés, less happy, have expressed to me:

"No child in my parish could make Analyses. The master and mistress of the *Commune* do not even teach their pupils properly the prayer for every day, and the letter of the Catechism. They neither take them to the Church nor send them there with any one. . ."

"I make a great point of my children attending regularly at holy Mass, and at all the Sunday Offices, but as I am in no way seconded by the master and mistress of the school, there are always some every week who fail to attend. . ."

"*They are very little watched over by their master*, who generally comes to Mass; but is frequently absent from Vespers, and often comes late to Church."

To conclude, gentlemen, it is evident that, in the work of the Catechisms especially, you can be much helped or much hindered by the masters and mistresses; it is then of very great importance for good that there should be excellent relations between the Curé and these persons; and a skilful and watchful Curé can without any difficulty establish such relations, by the services he himself can so often render them; and

besides, zeal for souls and the love of good make it his bounden duty.

Must I also tell you frankly my mind on this point, as lately I expressed it at the Catholic Assembly at Malines? It is this, that nearly always it depends on yourselves whether you have a friend in your school-master. For my part, I own, when I see these poor masters in the sad condition in which they sometimes are, buried in a village, isolated in mind from all around them, engaged in this incessant, dry, and ungrateful work, yet doing their duty courageously even to the end, I feel that I cannot too much love and bless them. And I do say, gentlemen, that under these circumstances, it is in your own power to make yourselves beloved by them, and that charity alone, even if other interests were not concerned in it, would make it your duty to show them kindness, respect, confidence and affection.

IV.

Now let us enter into the details of our great work. And first, as a general rule, there must be a first Communion for children *every year*, in each parish.

The disadvantages of having it only every two years are considerable. I will confine myself simply to mentioning the chief of these:

The first is, that the first Communion is then made when the children are thirteen or fourteen years old; now at that age—

1. The children have been placed in service; and strangers will not be so careful as parents to send them to the Catechism; many do not do it.

2. At this age, bad habits are more deeply roooted.

3. If they are not admitted, they must be kept back till they are fifteen or sixteen, and to prevent this, one is liable to admit some who are unfit.

A second disadvantage of this practice is, that there is no possibility of having *accompagnants*, which is much to be

regretted when we look forward to the perseverance of the children.

Then, gentlemen, it is extremely important that there should be a fixed day for the first Communion in the parish, and that it should not be lightly changed. With regard to this, I have prescribed nothing, I have left the choice of this day entirely to your own judgment; and as you are in the habit, and it is an excellent one, of coming to help each other on these days, it is only necessary that all the first Communions in the diocese shall not be made on the same day. Choose then whatever day or whatever festival you may desire, the Ascension, the *Fêtes-Dieu*, Thursday or Sunday; but let it be understood that the first Communion in the parish will, ALWAYS, be made on that day; and also consequently that on a certain day the Retreat will begin.

And in the same way, take whatever days you wish for your week-day Catechism, according to your convenience; but let these appointed days never be changed, nor the hours. Let it be quite understood that on such days and at such an hour they are to come to the Catechism; nothing is more disturbing to the children and the parents, particularly in the country, than changing the day or hour. Besides, by this constant regularity the Curé will impress the parents and the children with a great idea of the importance of this work, when they see that everything gives way to it.

"Regularity in the fixed days and hours," writes an experienced Curé, "is so necessary, that we had rather omit a Catechism, than put it off to another day or hour.

"As to the choice of the hour," he adds, "in the country it is not a matter of indifference. Fifty years of experience enable me to say positively, that *the early morning is the only favourable time:*

"1. Because in the early mornings the classes at the school are not disarranged by the Catechism.

"2. Because at that time the children have not been occupied with anything else but their Catechism, no other work has distracted their thoughts, or wearied their brain.

"3. Because the Catechism held in the early morning accustoms the children to get up early."

He adds also:

"The children, if possible, go first to their school, whence the master

brings them, in order, to the Church; so again, at the end of the Catechism, they should be taken back to the school in the same order, walking two and two. Without this double precaution the children will play, quarrel, or make a noise close to the Church, before and after the Catechism."

These observations are certainly full of wisdom.

But as to the days and hours for the Catechism, I say again, I prescribe nothing; I only ask that they shall be kept to *very exactly*, whatever are fixed on.

For how long a time should the Catechism immediately preparatory to the first Communion go on?

The Catechism ought not to go on too long; for then it would lose all its effect; this is important.

You must quite understand, gentlemen, that a long *instructive* preparation for the first Communion ought to have been made, and well made, for several years before the opening of the week-day Catechism: the great object of this Catechism is not so much to instruct the children, as to convert them. The essential and principal thing is to be able to exercise a strong and powerful pastoral influence over their soul; each period, even each meeting, ought to bring on this great work of their conversion by one step; and for this reason, it will not do to prolong this influence, which, the stronger it is, should all the more be kept within limits.

Three months, during which there will be no other Catechism in the week than the so-called week-day Catechism,—this is all that the children, especially in the country, can bear. And during these three months, twice a week, or three times at the most; no more, excepting during the Retreat. Otherwise, all strong and deep action is impossible. To wish, for instance, to have such a Catechism every day, is not to understand this work at all, it would simply destroy it.

Then, gentlemen, two hours for every meeting is the fitting time, and you must not go far from that, whether for more or less.

Therefore, for three months, two or three meetings a week, each lasting about two hours, is the right thing. Add to this

the Catechism of Perseverance on Sunday; you certainly must not demand more.

Two hours, perhaps some will say, is very long for the children.

It is not so long, gentlemen, as their lessons, which are twice a day, lasting two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon; and for the greater number, three hours in the morning and three in the afternoon.

And in all schools, children are occupied from ten to eleven hours every day, either in class, or in learning; and it is difficult work, and always the same.

Whereas, at the Catechism, there are several exercises during these two hours, and there can be a charming variety.

That week-day Catechism, which I held for seven children in a private house, always lasted two hours! I could not get through it in less.

I said, gentlemen, that the week-day Catechism, in the country, should be in its outward aspect the same, should have the same periods, or divisions of time, the same exercises, the same influences, in short, the same results, as in the town.

Let us first speak of the periods.

These three periods, in fact, which define the special and continuous character of your work on the children, and which we have already so largely dwelt on, evidently nothing prevents your going through them in the country, or from arranging, according to this order and progression, your own words and the impression which ought to be left at every meeting.

I go on then to the results.

The three principal results which are sought by this progressive work, and in going through these three periods, are, as you know: (1) The letter of the Catechism, learnt and repeated quite perfectly; (2) Prayer: to teach them how rightly to pray to God; morning and evening prayers, and holy Mass on Sundays; (3) Confession: to teach them how to confess well, how to communicate well; above all, for Easter. These are three points of supreme importance; one may say the sum of all religion is here for their lifetime. Well, the

country offers no particular difficulty in all this; quite the contrary.

In the first place, for the repetition of the letter of the Catechism, it is quite clear that a small number of children is a decided advantage. Being few in number, every one can be questioned at every meeting, and thus be obliged to know it; and this is a most powerful stimulant.

I consider that it is necessary, during the three months of the week-day Catechism which precede the first Communion, that the whole Catechism should be gone over; which will be easy, if the children have been made to learn it at the little Catechisms in the year before, and this ought to be done. The explanations, which at the week-day Catechism will be given on every lesson which is learnt, ought to be very short; you must reserve your longer explanations for those things which are the special subjects of instruction at the week-day Catechism; namely, grace, prayer, and the Sacraments of Penitence and the Eucharist. And here again, the small number of your children is most favourable to you, since it allows you time to multiply your questions, to vary your explanations, to make each individual child repeat, and repeat again, what you have said; which cannot be done in larger Catechisms.

In the second place, gentlemen, during the week-day Catechism, in the country particularly, you must insist positively on the great subject of daily prayer, and being present at holy Mass. Evidently these little country children must not be allowed to make their first Communion unless they know perfectly, and in such a way that they will remember them all their life, *Our Father*, *Hail*, *Mary! I believe in God, I confess to God;* and further, the Acts of *Faith*, of *Hope*, of *Love*, and of *Contrition*. If they do not know them then, they will never know them.

I say the same of the necessity, and of the right way of hearing holy Mass. During the little Catechism they have been taught to follow it with understanding, and with devotion; during the week-day Catechism this fundamental instruction must be thoroughly completed, and they must be

deeply impressed with the absolute obligation of hearing holy Mass every Sunday.

I have already mentioned the zeal of some of you on this point. And I must here insist strongly that it may be made possible to celebrate the Mass sometimes for them at the week-day Catechism. And I request also that they are taught how to join in the congregational singing at High Mass: the *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Credo*, *Sanctus*, and *Agnus Dei*. This is invaluable for giving them a love of the Offices, and for preserving them in the practice of religion.

But another thing which it is indispensable to teach them definitely and thoroughly is, in the third place, how to make their Confession rightly. I have given the motives for this in speaking of the little Catechisms; during the week-day Catechism you have every facility for it, better again in the country than in the town. Therefore, gentlemen, before the first Communion dwell very much on this point.

It must not be forgotten that Confession, of all the means which you have in your hands for converting and sanctifying the children, is the most efficacious and the most necessary; and that consequently you should make a great point of it, not only in view of the immediate preparation for first Communion, but also in view of the future, annual Confession being the rule, and being of such very great importance in the life of a Christian.

Therefore, particularly during the week-day Catechism, you must be very strong on the *regularity of Confession*.

The rule for Confession varies with the Catechisms and the ages of the children; it is as follows:

The year of the first Communion the children should confess at least every month; as soon as the week-day Catechism begins, every fortnight; when the time comes for their general Confession, every week, or even oftener, if the Confessor thinks it well.

Every experienced Catechist knows that regular and repeated Confessions are absolutely necessary for the attainment of any serious results, or for reaching the great object we are seeking.

Only negligence or inexperience could suggest any doubt about it.

But you must be strict in requiring, at least in the towns, that every time a child makes his Confession he shall bring *a certificate of Confession* to the Catechism.

This is indispensable; without it one could not, in large Catechisms, know if every child has his Confessor, nor if he goes to him regularly, nor indeed if the Confessor is himself diligent and zealous about chil lren's Confessions.

Strictness in demanding certificates of Confession, and care in keeping exact note of them, for each child, in a special register,[1] are quite as necessary as the rule itself for the regularity of Confessions; for it is the means, without which we should never know if the rule were kept.

But in the country, gentlemen, you have not this difficulty; you yourselves always confess your children; and moreover, having so few to hear, you can, particularly during the week-day Catechism, make them come oftener, and give them more time, which these poor children so greatly need, and which you need yourself for educating and training their soul.

By a good Confession I mean two things; to accuse oneself truly of one's sins; and to repent of them, with a good and firm purpose to sin no more.

To accuse oneself truly of one's sins. You have already, before this, and in the little Catechisms, insisted strongly on this point. But yet again, gentlemen, do you not see what advantages a zealous and discreet Priest in the country will derive from the possibility of more frequent and more prolonged interviews with the children? There are so many things to be said to them to induce them to conquer the shame

[1] One Catechist has the special charge of making note of these certificates. He should never fail to write them down immediately after every meeting; and if a child who ought to have brought in his certificate is *late* with it, he should inform the Head Catechist. And the Head Catechist, on his side, should often speak of this article of the rule. On the festival days it might be said that such a child would have deserved a reward, perhaps even would have gained a book, but that he *will have nothing*, because at the right time he did not bring in his certificate of Confession. (*Coutumier des Catéchismes.*)

which is so natural to them at that age, and to open out all their sins ;[1] and often you have to begin again several times.

To repent of their sins, and have Contrition for them. And how easy it is, when hearing their Confessions often, to suggest to them motives for Contrition! And above all, what is perhaps better still, how much, in these repeated and close interviews, you can help them by impressive and particular advice to correct themselves gradually of their faults and their bad habits ; and this is the great and true mark of Contrition. Thus you have three preparations for absolution ; and finally, you can in the same way inculcate upon them, for their whole life, practices of piety, not in great number, understand that, but essential ones, such as will make them solid Christians. All this, in Catechisms where there are a great many children, is much more difficult. Some short advice, given at few and far intervals, to each child, hardly suffices for the enlightenment of their soul, or for any strong influence; it is quite different in the country.

Make the most then, gentlemen, of your advantages, and

[1] On this point I find in the *Miroir du Clergé* and in the *Méthode de S. Sulpice* the following excellent advice :

"You can say to the children, 'There are some sometimes who are ashamed to accuse themselves of certain sins ; the devil persuades them to think there is no harm in them, and that they need not speak of them. . . Do you know what you should say to yourself when you are tempted not to own something to your Confessor? You should say, But if it is not a sin, why am I ashamed to tell it? If there is no harm in it my Confessor will tell me so, and my conscience will be at rest ; if, on the other hand, I do not tell it, I shall always be afraid it may have been a sin, and I shall be in danger of committing another by not telling everything in Confession.'

"After having explained to them how wrong it is to hide faults in confession, the Catechist will say in a decided manner that they must not think of doing such a thing. 'For,' he will add, 'what do they mean by confessing, if they do not tell everything? They know well that their sins will not be forgiven ; they know well also that these sins, which they are ashamed to tell in a whisper to a Priest, who ought to be ready to die rather than reveal the smallest circumstance of them—that these sins will be one day exposed to the eyes of the whole world, that at the Last Judgment they will be in confusion at finding themselves reproached for them in the presence of all the host of heaven, and of all the men who have lived on earth, and that then they will be condemned without mercy for these very sins which now they will not take courage to confess by themselves to one man alone. . . Was I not right, my children, when I told you they were only madmen who hide their sins in Confession?'"

particularly of this one, which clearly compensates for many of those difficulties of which you complain. For here the work of your ministry is direct, personal, individual; it is close, deep, and powerful. Here is the true theatre for zeal, the very basis of pastoral action. Here you have the time, but you must also have the art to make them love Confession. Here you must employ all the tenderness, the gentleness, all the discretion, and all the strength of sacerdotal love, in short, here you must be a Priest. It is clear, gentlemen, that in the very frequent and very serious Confessions of your children, you have a most fruitful means of influence; then make the most of it. Once again, as to Confession and Communion, as well as the letter of the Catechism; as to daily prayers, and hearing holy Mass on Sunday, the children will be all their life only what you bring them to then.

As to the *exercises* of the week-day Catechism, as before enumerated, I do not see that any one of them would be impossible in the country.

As to the prayers and hymns, the children there can pray with all their heart, and sing perfectly well.[1] I have often seen this in my pastoral visits.

As to the *Analyses*, the "*bons points*," the *Instructions* and *exhortations*, and the *examinations*, it is evident that only the form need be altered.[2]

The "*bons points*" are only one form of question and

[1] "Yes," one of you writes, "we sing hymns, we have succeeded in singing nearly all of them, and very correctly. To attain this I *gave to each school, and particularly to the girls' school, the list of the hymns we should sing*. These hymns were practised in each house, and perfectly learnt."

[2] The examination is conducted in the country with great solemnity in the parish Church. It is given notice of at the *prône* at least two Sundays before. All the parents are invited to it. The Dean is invited, and some of the neighbouring Curés. It begins with holy Mass, during which hymns are sung. After Mass, generally about ten o'clock, the examination takes place publicly and solemnly. Before beginning the Dean is kind enough to speak a few words of encouragement to the children. Then he calls each in succession; they stand up and answer.

If the children should be too numerous the examination can be conducted in another way. There must be more examiners, seven or eight, for instance, who should examine the children, divided into little groups of ten, in the large nave of the Church.

explanation: it is for you, in that necessary preparation which I have already spoken of often, to adapt them to the capacity of your children.

The best way of giving the *Instructions* of the week-day Catechism, is not in the form of a continuous discourse, which would be almost a waste of time; but—note this well, gentlemen—under the form of questions and answers.

Divide your subject into several questions, which must embrace the whole thing; these questions must be simple, easy, not complicated or confused; then answer each of these questions, simply, clearly and shortly. This series of questions and answers dictated to the children who can write, is a great help to them afterwards in making Analyses. I shall treat the question of *analysis in the country* more explicitly, when I speak of the Catechisms of Perseverance.

As to the *Exhortations*, the *Admonitions*, the *Counsels*, which we already know of, why should country children have less need of them, and why should they be more hard to reach than the children in towns? On the contrary, knowing them better as you see them more closely, how much more direct you can make all you say, and speak of such and such a need, or such and such a fault in each child, whom you know so well!

No; pastoral action, the work on souls, is not more difficult in a Catechism composed of few children than in a very large Catechism; there may perhaps be less *éclat* about it, but in reality there may be more life and more real efficacy. And in his little Church, in his humble Chapel, in his poor sacristy, with his little rough peasants, the village Catechist who knows what the work of the week-day Catechism is, and who will put all his soul into it, all his heart, and all the resources of his mind, can, so to speak, mould these young souls with his hand, he can go deeper with them than would be thought possible, he can raise them up by true piety to wonderful moral heights, he can truly carry out the sublime work of religion, as the prophet has defined it: "*Lex Domini immaculata, convertens animas; testimonium Domini fidela, sapientiam præstans parvulis.*"

V.

In the country as well as in the town, gentlemen, the first Communion must of necessity be preceded by a Retreat.

All the reasons which have led to the institution of these three days of immediate preparation for the first Communion in the towns, are equally applicable in the country; and you have the means in your own hands for making them extremely profitable to the country children. I will even say that, having the children for the whole day either at the school or with the Sisters, your work upon them is much easier than in Paris, for example, where, after the exercises, they have to go back to their own families, and to the distraction of the world.

But I need say nothing to you, gentlemen, on the necessity of a Retreat, for the thing exists everywhere, without exception, the custom of a Retreat before the first Communion being universal in the diocese.

Let me only give you by way of specimen, the following rule for a Retreat of first Communion in the country; it is one among many almost absolutely similar, sent to me by several Curés in this diocese, in answer to my questions on this subject:

"The Retreat opens on Holy Trinity Sunday, at Vespers, and lasts three full days, the first Communion being on the first Thursday of the *Fête-Dieu*.

"On Monday and Tuesday there are three exercises:

"At eight o'clock in the morning, hymn, prayer, and meditation. Then Holy Mass, Admonition, hymn and sermon.

"At one o'clock, an opening hymn, Admonition, recitation of the *chapelet*, rehearsal of the ceremonies; then again Admonition, hymns, a short conference, and departure. At four o'clock, hymn, little Vespers, sermon, hymn, Admonition, and departure.

"On Wednesday, on account of Confessions, there are only two meetings. At eight o'clock, prayer, Mass, Act of Contrition, adoration of the Cross during the singing of the *Stabat Mater*. At four o'clock, Admonition, hymn, a short Instruction, hymn, Admonition, and departure.

"Between the exercises, the children remain with the Sisters or with the master of the school. The time is filled up sometimes by reading to them an excellent little book, *Le Grand Jour Approche*, sometimes by

letting them write down their impressions of the Retreat. They take their meals there ; they have little recreations, they sing hymns, they relate stories. The children are generally quiet, thoughtful, and attentive."

This rule is excellent, and may well be taken as a model, at least in essentials.

I will only dwell on a few details.

Evidently, throughout these three days of Retreat, we must be everything to the children. There should not be a single moment of those three days in which they are left to themselves, *without direction or attention.*

And besides, you must neglect nothing, so that these days, far from being a weariness to them, shall be very pleasant ; this is a *sine quâ non ;* you cannot otherwise do them the good which at this time you should do.

Besides the exercises, they can be greatly interested in several ways ; by *looking over their written impressions* of the Retreat, at least for those who can do it ; you must make them feel it to be of great importance ; then, by *singing hymns* during recreation-time : in fact nothing is more delightful, particularly if you can bring them to sing with devotion ; finally, by *reading* to them ; the books must be well chosen, must be pleasant as well as edifying, or still better, by *stories ;* you can delight them by these more than by anything else.

I need hardly add that in the evening, after the exercises, the boys and girls must not be sent home *at the same time ;* there are disadvantages about this which it is most important to avoid. Watch over their departure, therefore, as much as you can.

I will only say these few words about details, for which the reason is obvious ; I need not seek to convince you further, that the Retreat, as the great day of first Communion draws near, being your most powerful means of influence, and the time when you are putting the last touch to your great work, should be the object of your greatest care, of your most intense, and yet of your sweetest labour.

I do not know if I deceive myself, but it seems to me, gentlemen, when I try to picture to myself what a good Priest, who really puts his soul into his ministry, can do and can be

for his children during these three days that he has them thus in his hands—it seems to me, indeed, that he can really realize the words of our Lord, "*sicut gallina congregans pullos suos sub alis;*" that he can, by his love, his care, his devotion, his kindness, his tenderness, so nourish these young souls, that they will open out to the love of the good God. And all this, I repeat, can be done more easily than in the towns, because the children are fewer, and quite as well disposed.

"I could wish," writes a venerable Priest, "that the divine tenderness of our Lord, Who said to His disciples, in the fifteenth chapter of S. John: '*Jam non dicam vos servos, vos autem dixi amicos,*' should enter the heart of a Curé, at the moment when he gathers the children round him for the Retreat of the first Communion; that he may say to them: 'You are no longer to me only scholars, you are henceforth my little friends; I am going to devote myself to you, to treat you as my favourite children, to instruct you, to encourage you with unfailing affection; for I have to bring you even to the holy Altar, to make you fit to receive our Lord; and therefore to inspire in you the firm resolution to be always, and at all cost, the friends of God, Who has already been so merciful to you, and Who is preparing to be yet more so.'"

"Every Admonition during the Retreat," writes another good Priest, "turns on being wholly and undividedly given up to God. Then all the difficulties of the future must be boldly set forth, the hindrances to perseverance, the thousand objections which the devil, the world, and unbelief will not fail to make, to separate them from the holy tribunal and from the holy Table; they must be shown what precautions they must take against falling back, the remedies against being disheartened, &c. . . . What constitutes the strength of a good Pastor, that by which he will conquer, is his gentleness, his kindness; he is strong, because he passionately loves these young souls, and looks at them with pleasure through the rough exterior which conceals their real selves. He loves and he is loved. They readily take in his friendly, fatherly words, they identify themselves with him, their hearts beat in sympathy with his, and though it may only be through love of him, before even they know God, yet already they love Him Whom this holy Priest loves and teaches to love. . ."

With such sentiments, gentlemen, miracles may be worked, in the country as well as in the towns.

Again, gentlemen, in country parishes perhaps better than in towns, you can make the day of first Communion the great festival of the parish.

On the evening before, the bells sound out *à grande volée*,

as for the highest solemnities, and on the day itself, with the dawn, their joyful call begins again.

The Altar is decorated as on the highest festivals; hangings, a profusion of flowers, candles; you bring out all the charming riches of your fields, and of your modest little Church.

At seven o'clock the children assemble at the presbytery, the boys under the conduct of the master, the girls under the care of the mistress or the Sisters. I am prescribing nothing, gentlemen; I am simply relating what is done in certain of our parishes. Then we go for them, and bring them to the Church in procession, singing that sweet and beautiful hymn:

"Troupe innocente d'enfants chéris des Cieux. . ."

This procession may be made charming. The children of the choir, dressed as richly as is possible, with the Cross and the parochial clergy, the young girls of the Confraternity, with their banner; the other Confraternities with their banner, if there are any; then all the little children of the schools, with little flags or banners in their hand. The Curé and all his brethren surround the children of the first Communion; all these dear children are in holyday attire, and all the Priests in white surplices; and on the way the whole parish is there to see.

They enter the Church to the sound of the organ and the singing of hymns. Every child, on arriving at his place, finds opposite his seat and within his reach a *little arrangement* for receiving his taper. Thus, a child has not to think about it but at the time of the procession; the taper remains alight throughout the ceremony; it is no longer an embarrassment and a danger, but remains a bright ornament which speaks to all eyes, and contributes to the beauty of the festival.

The children of the first Communion are all placed in the choir. I will tell you of one charming idea which a Curé of this diocese has adopted: every child is placed between his father and his mother, and thus no parent thinks of not being present at the first Communion, and many accompany their children to the holy Table.

In most parishes, also, each child has his *brother*, or a girl, her *sister* of the first Communion; it is an excellent custom, bringing families closer, and creating good friendships for life.

As soon as the children are placed, and a short Admonition given, prayers are said; then the children sing the *Veni Creator;* but if they do not know it well enough, it is better to sing a hymn which they know.

It is the custom in several parishes to introduce a great ceremony in the morning, which is generally reserved for the evening: the procession to the baptismal font, and the renewal of the baptismal promises. There is reason in this practice, and I am far from blaming it; it may moreover be an excellent further preparation for the first Communion itself. The children, two and two, each in turn, after a short and stirring address from the Curé, pronounce their solemn renewal, before the whole assembled parish.

Having returned to their place, the Mass begins. Even if it is the only Mass of the parish, there must be hymns; the Acts must also be said, either before or after the Communion, by one or two children who have been well practised; and also a fervent exhortation from the Curé at the very moment of Communion.

The prayer for the parents, said by a child kneeling on the altar-steps, at the proper time, has also a most excellent effect.

After the Mass of Communion, and the Act of Thanksgiving, a slight breakfast is given in some parishes to the children, in the garden of the presbytery, with a *brioche bénite*, or some other delicacy; and these are not trivial things, gentlemen, but things which have excellent results; everything must speak of happiness and even gaiety to the children on this day; and M. Borderies, that great Catechist, knew well what he was about when, at the *Sainte-Chapelle* and at S. Thomas, he gave this little breakfast to the children; many of you have adopted the custom from him. The expense is not great, and it is easy to find some pious lady or some respectable farmer who will gladly undertake to supply the *pain bénit* on

such a day, and thus spare your church funds or your own purse.

At half-past ten High Mass is sung, if you have been fortunate enough to find one of your brethren who will let you have one, which is very desirable and very easy. Let the children take as much part in it as possible, by singing the *Kyrie*, the *Gloria*, the *Credo*, the *Sanctus*, and the *Agnus Dei*. All this you should have been able to teach them, as I said just now. There can be two choirs, the boys and girls singing alternately. "A High Mass, sung by themselves, the idea has delighted them," writes one of you. But still it must be preceded and followed by hymns; nothing takes the place of hymns. In the course of High Mass, the Curé should not fail to go into the pulpit and address a few words to the parents, a *prône*, well prepared, on their children's first Communion, and on perseverance.

Then the parents, who have brought provisions, dine with their children, either at the school or with the sisters, or with their own friends, or perhaps, if the weather permits, quite simply and happily on the grass in the fields.

At three o'clock the bells sound again, and the little Vespers are chanted in chorus; then the *Salut*, and afterwards the procession to the altar of the Blessed Virgin, the address, and the Consecration to Mary.

After which, the children having returned to their places singing a hymn, the Curé goes into the pulpit, and gives a last address to them and their parents upon perseverance, making it as touching as possible.

This last Instruction is of extreme importance, gentlemen, and should be prepared with the greatest care; there must be words so touching and penetrating that they will leave their lasting impress on the soul, and, in the emotion of all hearts, will complete this day of blessing.

The next morning, the Mass of Thanksgiving, followed if possible by a walk, in which the boys will be accompanied by the Curé or the Vicaire, and the girls by their respective mistresses.

On this day, or on the following Sunday, at the Catechism

of Perseverance, the *cachets* of the first Communion are solemnly distributed to the children.

Thus, gentlemen, is passed the first Communion in the country, and again I say, I do not see that the country has any reason to envy the town.

BOOK V.

ON THE CATECHISMS OF PERSEVERANCE.

FIRST DISCOURSE.

THE NECESSITY AND THE OBJECT OF CATECHISMS OF PERSEVERANCE.

I HAVE now arrived, gentlemen, at a very important subject: the Catechisms of Perseverance. Perseverance is always a great thing, and it is always a very grievous thing if our work has been ephemeral, and produces no lasting results. But above all when it is a question of God and religion, of souls and their eternal salvation, how grievous only to have accomplished a work which has no durability, and how supremely important it is to attain completely the object we have in view.

Here then, gentlemen, are these children, whom our Lord Jesus Christ has confided to you, to the end they may not perish, for "*it is not the will of the Father in heaven that one of these little ones should perish,*" who have been brought on by you up to this happy day of first Communion: they know God, and they love Him; their religious instruction has begun, and you have planted, as Fénélon says, the young plants of faith and piety in their souls. But shall this be all? is their perseverance secured? You have laid the foundations of the building, but is the building finished, has it received its head-stone? Can you now rest and say, "*Opus consummavi*"? and again, "*Quos dedisti mihi, custodivi*"? If you can, then it is finished, and I have nothing more to say. But if it is otherwise, if the perseverance of these dear children still demands your care; if it is not with these young souls like the ground, which, when a man has tilled it and sown his seed, and the seed is already springing up, he has nothing

more to do than to leave it to the sun and the rain; if you would secure what you have done, and not see it all very soon miserably vanish away; if you would, in short, attain to that needful and settled result, Perseverance—then you must absolutely devote yourself to a fresh labour; evidently it is your duty, and I am going to show you the means to be used.

These means, gentlemen, are already known and employed; we again have recourse to our great engine for good, Catechisms, called now, and for this reason, Catechisms of Perseverance; and it is of these Catechisms, gentlemen, that I am now about to discourse with you.

I.

NECESSITY OF CATECHISMS OF PERSEVERANCE.

My proposition, gentlemen, is that the Catechism of first Communion, efficacious and powerful as it is, needs to be continued and completed by the Catechism of Perseverance. In fact, the importance and the necessity of Catechisms of Perseverance is unquestionable.

At what age, gentlemen, are children admitted to make their first Communion? At twelve. Well, I ask you, is the work of the Catechism—that is to say, Christian education—finished at that age? Can it be?

What is education, gentlemen, the true Christian education, which we, as pastors of souls, have to attend to? It is, in the order of religious things, the complete, solid, strong, finished education of the mind, the heart, and the whole life. But for this education, does the age of childhood suffice? Evidently not.

In fact, an education of this nature, so high, so complete, so delicate, which should embrace the whole man, and reach to the depths of his soul, which ought to form him for time and for eternity, against which—and he must be well warned of it—the storms of passion will very soon lift themselves: for such

an education the years of childhood, so light-hearted, so forgetful, so ignorant besides of the things of life, cannot suffice.

For this, we need also the age of adolescence and youth; that age when the mind, having become more intelligent, can enter into the depth of the Christian verities, can understand the economy of Christian morality, and the necessity for its most severe precepts; we need those years, when the heart is most strong for attaching itself to good; when virtue, having by its early struggles been initiated into the great warfare which awaits it, is most manly, and feels all the value of the power which religion offers to man in preserving him or delivering him from the contagion of evil.

And, besides, what does experience show us? What becomes of all those children whom you have brought to their first Communion with so much zeal and such labour? You know, gentlemen, and during these discourses we have more than once sighed deeply over it, that bad examples and bad passions are not long in getting possession of them again; that it is only a few who persevere in the practice of religion, the others, very soon, give up everything. We cannot deceive ourselves about this, the truth is too evident; the greater number of boys, more than all, escape you; those who remain, those whom you save, and who persevere, are alas! according to the comparison in Scripture, like the ears picked up in the field after the harvest. The harvest is reaped by vice, and impiety, and the devil; and you have only what escapes them.

But if unhappily it is so, gentlemen, if the years of adolescence and youth threaten to ruin all the good we have done in early childhood, is it not a sacred duty to do all in our power to prevent such misfortune? Can we suppose we have accomplished our task, when we have simply cast the good seed into these young souls, if we neglect to care for its growth? Is this poor little child of twelve years old strong enough to do without our support, to go on his way by himself? And if the years on which he is entering are the most perilous, shall we have done all that his soul, his eternal salvation,

all that our own affection for him demands, if we leave him to himself, just at the time when he has most need of us? No, gentlemen; and all we have said in our first discourses on the necessity of Catechisms in general, applies again here, and shows, without our needing to insist upon it, the absolute necessity of the Catechism of Perseverance, which gathers up the fruits of all the others, and without which all that has been done hitherto would be lost.

Two things chiefly, gentlemen, cause the loss of souls; ignorance of religion, and the passions.

Well, the Catechism of Perseverance is the only and the great help here. By it the first teachings of the faith are strengthened in the mind. You know, gentlemen, that the first lessons, even those which have been the best taught, and the best received, could not penetrate very far because of the tender age of the children; they are hardly more than sketches, traced out on the surface; but if the Catechism of Perseverance comes in to strengthen the lines and to engrave them deep in the soul, they will never be effaced.

But while the Catechism of Perseverance strengthens and completes the knowledge of religion, it also teaches the practice of it; it forms habits of piety, it helps the struggle against rising passions; and this perhaps, gentlemen, is the great benefit of this Catechism. It is a great school of religion, but, if I may so express myself, it is also a school of application, a practical school, just at the age when forgetfulness and failures are most to be dreaded; while it teaches, it exercises, and by exercising it strengthens and preserves; it gives an enlightened faith, and by faith, and the practice of religion, virtue is saved.

You understand, gentlemen, that in a Catechism of Perseverance, everything is specially arranged and done for the good of its members (*Persévérants*); a plan of very high and very attractive Instructions is carefully arranged and followed out, and thus they are thoroughly instructed in the whole of Christianity; there again, by touching exhortations mingled with the Instructions, they are given advice precisely suiting their age, their position, their duties, their needs, their

dangers; there also, by hearing the holy Mass rightly, by singing hymns, by the general Communions, the love of prayer is nourished in them; there, finally, they are really trained to the hallowing of Sunday, to frequent attendance at the house of God, to all the practices of Christian life.

And yet, is this evident necessity for Catechisms of Perseverance really recognized, and by all? No, gentlemen, it is painful, says the *Méthode de S. Sulpice,* to think *that a great number of children only give up religion because they themselves have been given up.* In their childhood, they are instructed, they are prepared to come worthily to the holy Table. But this duty fulfilled, they are thought no more of; this is the sad truth nearly everywhere. And yet, if ordinary Catechisms are one of the most important parts of the ministry of souls, what should one think of these higher Catechisms, which are the only means for preserving everything, and really educating Christian generations in our parishes?

For yourselves, gentlemen, and I thank God for it, you are as well convinced as I am, that the Catechisms of Perseverance are the sole hope and the sole future of religion amongst us, and that the most holy practices, assistance at the divine Offices, Confession and Communion, will only be held in reverence either in our towns or our villages, if the Catechisms of Perseverance are carried on with vigour.

II.

OBJECT OF THE CATECHISMS OF PERSEVERANCE.

Let us now go further into the work. What is proposed, exactly, in a Catechism of Perseverance? Two fundamental things. To strengthen and confirm religious instruction in the children, and piety. Everything is organized for this twofold object, everything is directed towards this twofold result.

Let us begin by speaking of the first of these two things, of Instruction.

1. *Instruction in the Catechism of Perseverance.* I do not scruple to say, gentlemen, that this sort of preaching, which is quite peculiar to itself, as is the audience; which is neither too familiar nor too high, simple but yet refined, gentle but yet forcible; this sort of modified preaching is most useful to those who deliver it, and most interesting to those who listen to it.

Catechisms of Perseverance should no doubt be made pleasant and varied; but above all, they must be made very instructive. I will even say that giving Instructions in the form of exhortation, as in the week-day Catechism, is not suitable here, it should be more the didactic method. Piety, properly so called, will here be nourished in a different way.

To teach, to explain, clearly, forcibly, even eloquently, the dogmatic truths and morals of the faith, this is one essential object of the Catechisms of Perseverance. And why, gentlemen? The reason for it is simple and weighty; I have said before, but I repeat it again, in this country and in this age, it is solid faith, strong, enlightened faith, which is wanting in our youth, and too often in riper age, and it is a very great misfortune; for without a solid, generous, elevated faith, piety has no real foundation; it is a piety without true religion, a piety and faith of mere routine, of habit, or of sentiment; it has nothing in it great, nothing strong, nothing courageous, nothing rooted. What the Council of Trent calls the *root and foundation of justification* is wanting, and therefore nothing lasts.

I am speaking of the Catechisms for girls, gentlemen, as well as of the Catechisms for boys, when I declare the necessity of laying the foundations of the faith in strong and sound Instructions. Our object is not to excite passing emotions, not to inspire a sort of religious, but insipid and vain sentimentality, nor some outward, superficial and deceiving practice, nor a devotion made up of imagination or caprice, of habit or the fashion; our object is to make real Christians, and therefore to train them in true, strong and serious Christian life; in the life of duty, in the real practice of virtue: it is all there, but it will not be attained except by planting strong

and enlightened faith in the soul. It would be to give a very false direction to the Catechisms of Perseverance, not to aim sufficiently at establishing a settled faith in the mind and heart, secured from ignorance and doubt; and it would be a very great fault to let sensibility or vanity take the place of real advancement in piety.

Therefore, gentlemen, at the Catechisms of Perseverance, you must instruct, and instruct thoroughly; it will suffice to say here that they must be given in a connected manner, and upon a certain plan.

At every meeting some one point of doctrine must be developed, according to the plan sketched out beforehand, which must be kept to.

I need not repeat here that these Instructions should be very well prepared, very sound, even very beautiful, spoken very well, eloquently if need be; but above all, they must always be very clearly divided.

I have spoken of all these things with all possible detail in the third discourse of the Second Book; and at the end of this volume, in an Appendix,[1] I will show you a complete plan of Instructions for four years of Perseverance.

2. *Piety at the Catechism of Perseverance.* Instruction is the foundation of Christian piety; but the building itself is piety, and by this I mean the deep sentiments of the soul, expressing themselves outwardly in the life, by religious practices and the exercise of virtue.

This, gentlemen, is the great benefit of the Catechisms of Perseverance; they train in piety, in good, real, solid piety, of which S. Paul says, "*Pietas ad omnia utilis est.*"

After all that has been said on this important subject in our first discourses, I need not here dwell on it; it is merely necessary that I should sum up, with a view to Catechisms of Perseverance, and lay before you all the means by which hearts are to be trained in virtue and Christian life.

There are first the *Admonitions:* these should be simple and familiar, urgent and forcible, and going much into detail. These Admonitions are particularly excellent for giving to

[1] There is no Appendix in the original. (*Translator.*)

young people of both sexes, trustworthy guidance at this delicate and critical period of their life. But in a Catechism of Perseverance it is very necessary that these Admonitions should not be given at random, without any connection or special object; they must be so arranged as to form a little course of morality, specially suited to these young people in the world; but this will not prevent, on special occasions, giving Admonitions suited for particular circumstances.

This part of the Catechism of Perseverance is of the very highest importance, and demands continuous attention on the part of the Catechist; he must provide for everything, and for this purpose, a plan of Admonitions, well thought out, and complete and well composed, is indispensable; not less so is it that he should prepare for his manner of delivering them, with discretion and with tact, not making them too long, and always looking at them from a practical and really useful point of view.

Next, the *Homilies*, the little sermon, the text of which is the Gospel of the day. Nothing is more capable of ready application than the holy Gospel, and with a little study and reflection it is easy to bring it to bear on the special faults or virtues of youth. Thus it becomes a course of piety and morality, like the Admonitions, but somewhat more strong and elevated. Well prepared, these little sermons may be made exceedingly pleasant and profitable to the children.

Sermons, from time to time, on the festivals, add to the interest and solemnity of the Catechism, and moreover may leave very salutary impressions on so well-disposed an audience; without losing their simple character, and a certain style of their own, these sermons will bear to be eloquent, and may be brilliant, or pathetic.

This is not all. In a Catechism of Perseverance there are other means, and very effective ones, for inspiring piety: these are the monthly Communions, the Festivals, the Retreats, and the Charitable Works of the Catechism.

The Monthly Communions: because while the Catechism is going on they are celebrated nearly every month, that is, seven or eight times a year. It follows naturally on the establishment of a Catechism of Perseverance, and at the

same time it forms one of its greatest charms and its most precious fruits. For thus, gentlemen, fervent souls are formed, which become the edification and the blessing of a parish.

Every Catechism of Perseverance then, which has any fervour, has its monthly Communions. Of course it is not laid as an absolute rule on every child; indeed, while strongly exhorting them to this excellent practice, it is necessary to warn them that it is not of obligation, but quite optional and a question of devotion; still it is well that all, even those who are not going to partake of the Holy Communion, should be present; for the sight of it edifies them, and may revive their own fervour. The monthly Communions are generally connected with the great festivals; and the following order is mostly observed: first, a pious meditation, then the Mass with beautiful hymns; before the Communion a short and touching address, the *Adore Te* during the Communion itself, sometimes a second address afterwards; then, the Mass being concluded, the customary prayers for gaining the plenary indulgence are recited.

Two obvious and incalculable advantages, gentlemen, result from these monthly Communions: they give the children the habit of frequent Communion, and then they advance further and make fervent Communions; in isolated Communions would there be the same encouragement, the same help, the same fervour?

The *Festivals*, gentlemen, are another resource for inspiring piety; I have already said much about them, I will say very little here. There are two kinds of festivals in a Catechism of Perseverance: the festivals of the Church, and those peculiar to the Catechism.

All the great festivals of the Church must be celebrated in the Catechism of Perseverance. Nothing is more beautiful than the round of Christian festivals; the whole of religion, the whole mind of Christianity is there. When they are celebrated at the Catechism, their object, their mystery, their character is to be well explained, thus inspiring the children with true and solid piety, and at the same time with *esprit de corps* for the parish; for it is the attraction of the festivals

which greatly contributes to make the Offices of the parish Church delighted in; and this attraction is all the stronger if the festivals of the Church have been well understood and enjoyed at the Catechism.

Besides this, every Catechism has its own festivals; I have described to you, gentlemen, their great effect and charm at some length.

This little circle of festivals introduced into the great circle of the liturgical festivals, nourishes the special life of the Catechism of Perseverance, without isolating it from the parish; rather, as I have just said, it enhances the feeling for it.

In certain Catechisms, the children, with the help of the Instructions and Admonitions of the Catechism, and their own reading and impressions, write, simply and devoutly, a sort of account of the festival, which they keep, and can read to their edification later on.

Yet more useful than the festivals, gentlemen, are the *Retreats*, because, says the *Méthode de S. Sulpice*, they include all the other means of edification, and apply them to the soul, at a time when it is least distracted, and is therefore in the best condition for listening to the voice of God, and following the inspirations of grace.[1]

Lastly, gentlemen, there is another very effectual help in nourishing piety, which is to strengthen it by charity: to set

[1] In the Catechism of Perseverance of Saint-Sulpice, there are two Retreats, a great and a small one. The small one takes place during the Carnival days, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday of Quinquagesima, to withdraw the children from the distraction of these days, and to apply them to works of charity; it is very edifying to see with what assiduity and interest the exercises of the Retreat are followed. The great Retreat takes place at the time of the first Communion. If a special one could be given for the children of the Perseverance Catechism,* it would perhaps be more useful, because it could be made more appropriate to them; but this is often difficult. What must be done then, is to make them join in the Retreat of first Communion, which will be of infinite use to them again: the great truths are preached, the remembrances of the first Communion strongly revived, and thus their souls greatly stirred.

* This is done now in Paris, in the Perseverance Catechism of S. Thomas Aquinas, S. Philippe-du-Roule, and others besides.

up some work in the Catechism of Perseverance which shall greatly interest the children, and accustom them early to the practice of *Works of Charity*. A little Confraternity of S. Vincent-de-Paul is one quite easy to establish in a Catechism of boys. You will find, gentlemen, in the *Méthode de S. Sulpice*, most precise and complete details on the manner of organizing and directing such a work.

But this is not the only work possible. Every Catechism can have its own works, modified in form according to the needs, the resources, and the customs of the place. In one place there will be *patronages*, in another gatherings of young girls, who meet once a week or oftener, to work together for the poor. At Orléans, in the parish of S. Paterne, there is a work something similar to this, but under another name, which is very flourishing; it is the Association of the Holy Angels. The children who belong to it seek to do for poor children what the good angels, under whose banner they are enrolled, do for them; they are themselves helped and protected by the good angels, and they, on their part, try to be in some sort the guardian angels of their little *protégés;* it is certainly a very charming and a very Christian idea.

But whatever may be the work undertaken by the Catechism, the essential thing is that it should be considered as a thing of very serious importance, so that it should be held in high esteem by the children and young people, that it should be really a banner which they feel it an honour to rally round; this work must interest and occupy them, and it must be managed with zeal; it must have its own very complete organization, it must be conducted quite regularly, with its officers, its ledger, its meetings, its budget, its reports; in fact it must be a centre of life and activity for the Catechism.

Thus a very strong link with the Catechism is created for the children; and on the other hand, it gives them a real initiation into practical religion. The trouble they take in getting subscriptions, in arranging lottery tickets, in working themselves at clothing for the poor, will make them spend many profitable hours, and inspire them with sentiments which will be a wonderful help to their perseverance.

Such, gentlemen, are the ingenuities of zeal and the great methods by which Perseverance Catechisms are made at this day to flourish in the greater number of the large towns of France. There, in Chapels built expressly for them, you will find gathered, four, five, and sometimes six hundred children; and as I told you in one of our first discourses, they attend there regularly till they go out into the world, and their parents sometimes come in such large numbers that the chapels set apart for their use will not hold them all.

In the celebrated Catechisms of S. Sulpice, S. Thomas Aquinas, and others, there are four or five hundred, and you will see there many young people who frequent the Catechisms till they are settled in life. It is an understood thing; they go to the Catechism till they are married.

I have mentioned Paris, but I could also, gentlemen, speak of yourselves. Our Catechisms of Perseverance at Orléans, and in some other towns of the diocese, will yield to none; at the Cathedral in particular, there are four hundred young girls whose names are on the list of the Catechism of Perseverance.

SECOND DISCOURSE.

CHRISTIAN ACADEMIES OF PERSEVERANCE.

You will perhaps say, gentlemen: Yes, these large Catechisms of Perseverance, it is quite possible to have them in the case of young women. They are in general more devout, more teachable than young men, they are longer at home, and with their mother. But the lads, the young men, how many things there are which disperse them, and take them away from us!

I acknowledge, gentlemen, the work is more difficult with the youths than with the girls; but that it is impossible I will never admit; for, in fact, experience speaks to us here too, and we have facts.

Not only are gatherings of Perseverance for young men not impossible, I will even say that they are quite easy and will be attended with certain success, if only you know how to set about it, and will institute them under a somewhat different but suitable form.

For, gentlemen, though this age of adolescence—thirteen, fourteen, to sixteen or eighteen—may, for young men particularly, have its faults and its dangers, it also has its charms and its resources. There is an opening-out of brilliant and lovable character, which is very attaching, and which offers a delightful reward to zeal.

Therefore it is with great surprise and keen regret that I see nearly everywhere that zeal has grown cold on this point. The young girls in the parishes are still attended to; but as for the young men, one might say that the pastoral ministry has almost given them up, so few and feeble and so little followed up are the attempts made! Hardly anywhere do I

find serious efforts made to establish Catechisms of Perseverance for the boys. And yet, I repeat, that success is quite possible, even easy, if you know how to set about it, and the form it should take.

If may be, certainly, that this form may not be a Catechism, strictly so called; but what signifies the form, if the desired result, Perseverance, is attained? That is the thing.

In fact, my experience is that for young lads, meetings which did not bear the name of Catechism answered best; thus, at La Madeleine, in spite of all our efforts, and there were eight of us quite devoted to our work, for four or five years we did not succeed in gathering into our Catechism of Perseverance more than seventy or eighty children.

Then the idea came into my mind to try the same thing under another form and another name, and the success was complete.

I had seen at S. Sulpice, after my first Communion, a Perseverance Society for lads, under the name of an Academy. I was myself a member of it. It prospered wonderfully. The most distinguished Catechists were employed at this Academy. I have seen there M. de Salinis, afterwards Archbishop of Auch; M. de Scorbiac, formerly director of the college at Juilly; M. Fayet, afterwards Bishop of Orléans; M. Graveran, who died Bishop of Quimper. For the general Communions and the festivals, most distinguished people were invited: for instance, M. l'Abbé Fraissinous; M. Delalande, afterwards Archbishop of Sens; M. Borderies, and others who were then the glory of the French clergy. I saw and heard at one of our monthly Communions, M. Bruté, an American Missionary, afterwards Bishop of Vincennes, in the United States, and I remember yet the extraordinary effect of his apostolic words. I heard there also M. de Bonald, now Archbishop of Lyon, who had just then arrived from Rome, and delighted us by his accounts; it was in 1815.

The remembrance of this Academy, and all the blessings it had brought to me, determined me, in 1834, to establish a similar one at the Madeleine; and I must say that nothing I have ever undertaken has been more greatly blessed by God.

I certainly do not mean to say, gentlemen, that an Academy

is the only form these gatherings can take. There are others, and the best must be sought out; that is to say, that which is best suited to the parish, and to the means in one's power. I know several which are called Associations: the Association of S. Louis of Gonzaga, the Association of the Holy Angels; others which have taken the name of the Holy Family. I have before me now the printed rules of a Catechism of Perseverance for lads founded under that name, and still flourishing. Everything is good, if it succeeds. But I have had experience, gentlemen, and have been witness of the great success of the system of Academies; let me then recommend it to you, and let me describe it in practice and in detail.

In the first place, it is quite clear that the name of Academy pleases children who have just finished with elementary education, and still more it pleases young people who are just arrived on the threshold of the *Humanités;* and they will very readily receive the idea of these little Christian Academies. There is a combined religious and literary attraction about them, which is very powerful at that age, at least if I may judge by those I have known; the Academy of S. Sulpice, of which I have just spoken, and which was founded by M. Teysseire; the Academy of S. Hyacinthe, founded by myself in the chapel of that name; and the Academy of S. Félix, founded at Orléans, by the Vicars of the Cathedral. This Academy of S. Félix reckoned in a very short time nearly 350 members, and these made from 180 to 200 Analyses every Sunday; so great was the emulation, that last year the total of Analyses made was 4.700! Consider, gentlemen, the amount of useful work which this involves, and at the same time, the religious instruction which has thus been planted in these young minds.

At the Madeleine, as I said, we were never able to get more than seventy or eighty children to our Catechism of Perseverance. But in a few months after I had given notice of the opening of the Academy of S. Hyacinthe, nearly three hundred children were on the list. Many of the parents came with them, they came from all parts of Paris, the Chapel would not hold them. I remember one Easter Day, that with the fathers

or elder brothers of our Academicians, we counted more than five hundred persons, and the greater number of these made their Communion.

Among the young people, whose names were then on our lists, I can find a great many who have since been distinguished men, and many noble-minded Christians, the honour and strength of religion in these times. I will mention a few, they will allow me,—for instance, MM. de Falloux, Henri and Charles de Riancey, Adolphe Baudon, Louis de Baudicort, Agènor and Maurice de Gramont, Charles Place, Maurice d'Hauterive, de Ferrandy, Alfred Leroux, Marc and Etienne de Beauvan, Henri Fisson, Paul and Albert de Ressèginer, Elie de Gontant, Cyprien Halgan, A. and T. de Nadaillac, &c.

I ought to say that this Academy, though literary in name, in form, and in character, was nevertheless in reality a very serious school of Christian truth and virtue. And in three years, sixteen young men left it to enter the seminary, and have since become priests, and devoted priests; for instance, Monseigneur Place, whom I have just mentioned, now Bishop of Marseille; MM. Duchêne, Richard, Cathelin, of the diocese of Paris; M. Delahaye, now Vicar-General of Rouen, &c.

You must now see, gentlemen, how we arranged and composed our Academy. Under other names, you will recognize the groundwork and the organization of a Catechism of Perseverance:

There were, at first, thirty *Academicians;* soon the number was raised to forty. Before attaining this title, many grades had to be gone through. First came the *Aspirants;* every child who had made his first Communion was an Aspirant. When he had been an Aspirant for a certain time, and had been remarked for his zeal for religious instruction, and his diligence in making Analyses, he become a *Candidate.* We reserved to ourselves the choice of the Candidates, and you will see the reason. As the Academicians were taken from them, and they were elected by the Academicians themselves, it was necessary that they should only have distinguished and reliable Candidates from which to choose. There were

also those whom we called *Auditors;* these were children who were preparing to make their first Communion that year; "They come to listen to you," I said to the others, "and to be taught at your school." And thus, in good time, they got the habit of perseverance. Finally, there were *honorary Academicians;* these were distinguished priests or eminent laymen who were kind enough to confer this honour on our modest Academy. I have kept, and I have it before me at this moment, the discourse made by one of them, M. l'Abbé Arnault, at his reception; he was afterwards Curé of S. Joseph and S. Margaret, at Paris. I quote it, gentlemen, to give you an example of the means which can be used for exalting and bringing out everything connected with the Academy.[1]

[1] "Gentlemen, fifteen years ago, I was a member of a Christian Academy similar to this which we have just founded in this parish. Before belonging to it, I own, that as is often the case at your age, I pictured religion to myself under severe forms, and as if clothed in abstract ideas; and in the midst of the smiling imaginations of the poets and the brilliant eloquence of the orators of antiquity—for these were almost my only study, and were the charm of my youth—the study of the holy Verities seemed to me so dry, so cold, and so austere, that, though preserving in the bottom of my heart the strongest love and most inviolable attachment to religion, I took very little trouble to acquire a more extensive, a more solid, a deeper knowledge of it. These were my thoughts at that time, gentlemen. But as soon as I was admitted an Academician of S. Sulpice, my illusions were very soon dissipated, my confused ideas on religion were enlightened, the darkness of my mind was gone. With enthusiasm I admired the magnificent plan of God's great designs for man from the beginning even until now; and when I saw the marvellous history of Christianity, its irrefragable proofs, its deep truths, its heavenly gifts, its supernatural eloquence and its divine poetry, it seemed to my faith and my reason ever more and more beautiful, grander, more divine, more majestic, and more sublime. Thenceforth a happy change took place in my mind, and religion, in its turn, became almost the sole object of my most serious studies, and my most constant work. God did the rest; and while my young colleagues of the Academy went, some into camps, others to the bar, others to the magistracy, and others to the universities and learned societies, carrying with them a deepened knowledge of religion, and lovable as well as solid goodness, Jesus Christ condescended to call me to His divine priesthood, as also one of my best friends, whom I began to know and love at the Academy, M. l'Abbé Dupanloup. With great regret we left the Academy, and the day of separation was a sorrowful day for our hearts.

"Since then we have long dreamed of a future which might console us, and now lately, happy circumstances, which you have yourselves created, gentlemen, have revived all our hopes, and delighted our old recollections of the Academy of S. Sulpice; and, that I may live over again those blessed days of my early youth, that I may renew this link which has

M. de Borie, Curé of S. Philippe-du-Roule, was pleased also to accept the title of *honorary Academician*, as also M. Legrand, Curé of S. Germain-l'Auxerrois.

For this is of the first importance in a work of this kind; you must understand how to make it held in honour. If it is to flourish, the children and their families must have a high idea of it. For my own part, with this object in view I spared nothing, and even the perhaps slightly exaggerated pomp which we gave to everything, and might be seen even in our words, and the little honours which we tried to arrange skilfully, sometimes to one, and sometimes to another, all tended to the general good, and inspired all, both Catechists and children, with the strongest emulation, giving our Academy a wonderful reputation. I remember one day that M. de Montalambert, then quite young, but already a peer of France, and celebrated by the *procès de l'Ecole libre*, and who, though

been so long interrupted, I wish, gentlemen, to be, like yourselves, titular member of this Academy. I hold this title in honour, gentlemen, and the sincere friendship which I have always had for you, makes it both dear and precious. Moreover, I do not wish to share your glorious success without sharing also your noble labours; the Academy may always reckon on me. My leisure, my advice, and the fruit of my studies belong to it. And, gentlemen, your souls are too honourable, your hearts too well-trained, not to grasp the great duties which, from this day, are laid upon us. Study then the proofs, the great heights and the beauties of religion with yet more ardour than you have shown for the rules of taste and of language, for the art of speaking well, for the history of nations, for the ancient and profane languages. For the study of religion is the most important and the only necessary study. And indeed the earthly sciences may well make you admired by the world, and make you shine for a moment on this passing scene, but the science of religion can alone make you worthy of the love of God or of the esteem of men. Earthly sciences may amuse your mind for a short time, but it is only the science of religion which can comfort your heart; and finally, for each of us earthly sciences will one day come to an end, but the science of religion will still go on, and indeed it is only beyond the tomb that it will triumph, for it is only then that it will become like God Himself, from Whom it emanates, perfect, immutable, and eternal.

"Such, gentlemen, are the great thoughts which will henceforth direct all your studies. May God bless them. May you all one day be able to spread all around you, in the midst of this faithless and perverse generation, the brilliant light of truth and the sweet odour of virtue, and when hereafter, scattered about the world, some here, some there, in the course of our life we meet each other occasionally after long years, finding each other still Christians, still united, still faithful, we shall press each other's hand with tender and sincere friendship, and say, 'Friends, do you remember the happy days of the Academy of S. Hyacinthe?'"

not a member of the Academy of S. Hyacinthe, was from time to time present, could not get into the Chapel, because of the crowd; he asked for me, and I took him in by a private way.

This gathering then, at S. Hyacinthe, was an Academy, and I can assure you, they all took the title of Academicians as a very serious thing. It flattered greatly the young *humanistes*, the young literary pupils whom we had in great number, pupils of the second class and of the classes of rhetoric and philosophy, and inspired the others, I will not say with pride, but yet it was a legitimate and wholesome pride. For the groundwork of all this was thoroughly Christian, our words, our exercises, all thoroughly Christian, and our festivals very devout.

The festival proper to the Academy was the holy Childhood of our Lord, the model which we proposed for their perseverance was the Child Jesus Himself remaining in the temple in the midst of the doctors, and the motto of the festival, which we applied to our dear Academicians, was the words of the Gospel, "*Remansit puer Jesus in Jerusalem. . . In iis quæ patris mei sunt oportet me esse.*" I remember now how one of us explained this to the children, in one of those little discourses, prepared with great care, which we addressed to all our young disciples on one of these occasions:

"It was on the day of the solemn Passover, and already the scattered families of Israel, who had gathered together at Jerusalem, according to ancient custom, to celebrate the feast, after having offered the victim, and witnessed the august pomp of the sacred ceremonies, had left the holy city.

"For three days the temple had been solitary, and its silent vaults no longer echoed the praises and hymns of the Lamb of deliverance; only a few of the more fervent Jews had come to pour out their soul in secret before the Lord at the foot of His now-deserted altars; the sacrificers and the old men were still assembled there, and perhaps it was just the time for the short discourse which followed the morning offerings, or preceded the evening sacrifice; all at once a young Israelite was seen crossing the vestibule of the temple and coming into the midst of the holy assembly. To give you an idea of His grace and innocence I should need to speak the language of angels and take my similitudes from the heavens; an ineffable peace shone on His countenance, a sweet modesty in His looks, a

noble simplicity in His whole demeanour, a heavenly innocence seemed to envelope Him in its pure rays, like a vestment of glory, making Him like the angel promised by the Lord. The common inhabitants of Jerusalem had not perceived His glory, and wondering why He had not followed His brethren far away from the holy city, they could not understand why He, still so young, should come back with such eagerness to worship God and to visit His temple, after the crowd was dispersed. But the old men and the doctors, astonished and delighted to see in Him so much wisdom and grace, made Him, young as He was, take an honourable place in the midst of them. First He asked them questions and listened to them, like a sweet and modest child who desires to learn. Then, in His turn, He is questioned, and all at once something in His answers is felt to be so sublime, that the greatest and warmest admiration bursts out on all sides. They put new questions to Him, and His answers, though simple, are still full of sublimity and grace. None could help loving Him when they heard Him speak; and every one, as it were, held his breath to gather up the least words of wisdom which fell from His lips: '*Stupebant omnes super prudentia et responsis ejus.*' Even the doctors, who saw Him nearest, thought they saw a divine flame reflected in His looks, and that, as it were, a heavenly fire accompanied His words; and looking at each other uneasily, they could not resist the charms of this divine Child, nor understand who He could be. Touched, astonished, and conquered by a superior power, they were perhaps about to fall at His feet and adore Him, when an old, unknown man, followed by a timid and weeping woman—was she a heavenly virgin? or was she a most tender mother?—making their way through the people, and with tears said something to Him: the divine Child obediently follows them, and taking Him with them, they turn away, and already have passed the outer precincts of the temple while the whole assembly is still motionless and silent with wonder: '*Stupebant omnes*' . . .

"Jerusalem was for a long time perplexed by this wonderful apparition; but long years passed before the mystery was cleared up, and it was not till long after, when Jesus Christ, by the beauty of His doctrine, by His sublime virtue, by His great gifts and His miracles of power, had made all His glory appear, that at last the astonished world understood the hidden mystery of the temple, and the early glory of the divine Child who was one day to save the world.

"Eternal thanks be given to heaven that so high an example has not been wholly lost on the world! Honour and glory to those young Christians, who, while so many others, only too obedient to the lessons of irreligion, are basely betraying their faith and on all sides deserting, remain alone faithful to friendship, faithful to honour, and in the midst of the general defection, come to repay generously the early benefits of religion; and after having enjoyed the happiness and seen the brightness of the solemn festivals which it celebrated for them, come, in the day when it is forsaken, to comfort its sadness by the sight of their constant fidelity; and with Jesus Christ, under the eye of religion and in a dear and holy home,

are delighted to prolong the happy age of a holy and lovable childhood: '*Remansit puer Jesus in Jerusalem!*'"

Such is the tone we took; a little solemn, I grant; but I say again, this solemnity is not without its use in exalting and magnifying these little gatherings in the eyes of children and young people, who easily imagine that the whole world attaches the same importance as themselves to things which kindle their own enthusiasm; and, gentlemen, at this age, which is frivolous, no doubt, but yet noble and generous, this must be so. To complete a deep, durable, and penetrating work in the soul, this fire of emulation, of ardour, and of enthusiasm must be fanned. It is all the art which is necessary, and it can be easily done; for it is all in nature, in the very breath of things; God granted to us to do it in the Academy of S. Hyacinthe.

I will now give you the order of our meetings. After the prayer, we began by having the Catechism recited by the *Auditors;* some *active* part must be given to these children, and besides they have still need to know the Catechism. But the Academicians were not bound to be there during this recitation, they came in at a quarter or half an hour after it. Then the *Academicians* repeated the Gospel for the day, in Latin or Greek, at their own choice, or simply in French; this was followed by the Mass, during which hymns were sung. After the Gospel, the Priest, not going into the pulpit as in an ordinary Catechism, but simply from the altar, turning round, gave the Homily. After the Mass, some Admonitions were given, and a report made of the Analyses. Then came the Conference on some dogmatic subject, following a settled plan. This Conference was not conducted from the pulpit, but sitting at a table covered with green cloth, on which could be spread out the different books needed for quotation, or for reading passages from. The young people made an Analysis of this conference: I have now before me one of these Analyses made by Louis de Trogoff, it covers no less than fifteen pages, and this was by no means a rare example. Finally, followed—and this was perhaps the most

interesting part of the meeting—the discussion of objections against religion.

This exercise was in use at the Academy of S. Sulpice, but there, the children themselves were allowed to put forth the objections; and this had its disadvantage, for there is always a certain danger in turning the minds of children too strongly on the side of objections. I changed this at the Academy of S. Hyacinthe; we put forth the objections, and the Academi cians answered them. Every Sunday I dictated a certain number of objections, and during the week they sent us answers in writing. These answers had to be read by the Academicians themselves the next Sunday, and the reason why we always saw them beforehand, was to prevent any feeble answers being read out. I remember how this made these young people work; they were all on fire against irreligion, sometimes they even attained to eloquence, and had the true ring of apologists and apostles; their faith on every point was marvellously strengthened; and who knows? perhaps some who in later years became the valiant champions of religion, received then into their heart the first spark of that fire which made them in the world the athletes of God and the Church. Sometimes, indeed often, we had a talk with one or other of them, and to encourage him in his work, we would lend him a book, pointing out some special chapter to be read, thus as it were forcing him into the study of some important religious, historical, or philosophical question, and thus securing him, as a reward for his zeal and his work, a little triumph at the next meeting; and this was talked about at home, and every one enjoyed it, and it brought the Academy more and more into repute.

You will understand that *Admonitions* were interspersed with all this, and also *hymns;* and for this purpose I had a small Manual of the Academy printed, which could be carried in the waistcoat pocket; it contained the Ordinary of the Mass, Vespers, and all the carefully-chosen hymns which we sang.

One thing we avoided, and it must always be very carefully avoided in works of this kind, namely anything which would

recall the school-class or the college. We did not speak of their *copies*, but of their *Analyses;* they were not given *places*, but *seals* of different colours according to merit; we always gave them their baptismal name as well as their surname, they no longer *competed* among themselves like those at school, but were each given a seal or mark of distinction according to their merit.

Once more: every new Academician delivered a discourse on the day of his reception; the Director of the Academy responded; and on festival days, we had readings, either in prose or verse. Finally, once a year, in the last days of Holy Week, we had a Retreat, in preparation for Easter Communion.[1]

Such, gentlemen, is the way we conducted the Academy of S. Hyacinthe, and I maintain that in many large towns, and even in small ones, by making use of the helps you find, and with the co-operation of the various schools, there needs but the will to create works of like character, and, provided you bring to them continuous attention and zeal, they are certain to be successful, and to fill you with encouragement. I may repeat, we have a proof of it in the ease with which your brethren have organized this Academy of S. Félix at the Cathedral, as soon as they seriously took it in hand.

And is there not in Orléans itself, doing its work admirably for the last twenty years, a society of Perseverance, composed of men of the working classes, more than three hundred good working men and fathers of families? No doubt, it is neither called a Catechism nor an Academy. Nevertheless, it is a real little Christian Academy; under the guise of conversations historical and scientific conferences are given, and it is also essentially a real work of Christian perseverance; the meetings begin and end with prayer, every exercise is preceded and followed by a few verses of a hymn, and the Conferences are followed by a real Homily. In short, it is a work by which three hundred men are brought to persevere in morality

[1] Elsewhere, at S. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, this Retreat was held in the earlier days of Holy Week, and ended on Holy Thursday.

and religion. And as I said before, that is the whole thing.

But why have I just spoken of large and small towns? This *Work of Perseverance* at Orléans has been imitated in one of our rural parishes, and with the most encouraging results. But I hope to speak to you of this in detail in one of the discourses which I mean to address to you on the Catechism of Perseverance in the country.

To sum up what I have said, gentlemen, a Catechism is not the only way by which young people can be helped to persevere. Excellent for young girls—though certain societies or confraternities may also be so conducted as to take the place of a Catechism of Perseverance—it is not always the easiest way of helping young lads to persevere. Then it becomes necessary to attain the same object in another way. There are many ways; the Christian Academies seem to be one of the best, and I have told you what encouraging results I have myself experienced from them.

In a short sermon which I preached at one of the festivals of this Academy, I said in conclusion:

"For my own part, I will simply declare, that these recollections are the comfort of my life, and I feel beforehand, they will be my joy at my last hour on earth! And when my good colleagues and I shall appear before God, to this only shall we look for support, this will form our only hope for eternal happiness! With humble confidence we shall say to Jesus Christ, Whose ministers we are to you, 'Lord, we have done no great things for Thy glory; we have not, like the great Apostles, quitted our native country, and gone beyond the seas to preach the gospel to the heathen; we have not, like the courageous martyrs, fought for Thee even to death and shed our blood for love of Thee; but we have dedicated our life to making childhood happy, and childhood is dear to Thee! Every year we have joyfully led a happy troop of children whom Thou hast loved to those sweet pastures, which Thou, O good Shepherd, hast in Thy mercy provided for them! And though even then we were only unprofitable servants, though we had more reward than we deserved for only fulfilling a most sacred duty, yet if it is true that in bringing young hearts to love Thee, we not only labour for their happiness but promote Thy glory, then, by favour of our humble calling, we have done for our Creator and for our neighbour what Thy law demands. This is our only claim on Thy eternal mercy; but we urge it with confidence, and the God who has opened the

kingdom of heaven to children, will not shut them against those who on earth placed all their happiness and all their glory in being the guides and apostles of childhood.' "

It is very delightful to me to read these words again, and even now, gentlemen, these recollections of S. Hyacinthe, strong in my heart as in earlier years, still form one of my most precious hopes.

THIRD DISCOURSE.

ON SOME POSSIBLE OBJECTIONS TO CATECHISMS OF PERSEVERANCE.

It seems to me, gentlemen, after all that has been said, that the incalculable benefits of Catechisms of Perseverance, under one form or another, can be no longer a question, and that if they are properly conducted, one has a right to expect from them with certainty, most happy results for a parish.

Still, one must seek for truth in everything, and neither hide nor exaggerate anything; what is there on earth, however holy or useful, which may not be liable to some disadvantage? The Catechisms of Perseverance, has no objection ever been raised against them, have they not aroused some suspicion, particularly in the towns? No one doubts that they are excellent, but may not even a good thing be pushed too far?

This, gentlemen, is what I now wish to examine into. Let us try to draw out exactly all that has been said or can be said on this subject.

Undoubtedly, a Catechism of Perseverance is a source of piety in a parish. Such exercises, followed with diligence and zeal, ought to inspire pious tastes for life; but is this always real and solid piety? Is there not a danger, particularly in Catechisms of Perseverance for girls, that sometimes no real change is made in the soul, but that by the kind of preaching in use then, by the emotions excited, by the festivals, by the hymns, impressions rather than convictions are produced, and

a passing sentiment takes the place of strong and enlightened piety?

This is the first objection, and my answer is this: Yes, gentlemen, it is possible that the Catechisms of Perseverance for girls may have this danger, and may have this empty result. If they fail in gravity and seriousness, if there is no vigour about them, nothing, if I be allowed the expression, but rose-water; if the Catechists only show the children the charms of religion, if they only seek to move or to amuse them, then I can understand that such Catechisms will be enfeebling to the children, and indeed will be of no value to the Priests; but, gentlemen, this is the fault of the Catechists, not of the Catechism. It is evident, that if esteem and honour for this holy institution should be lost, it will be by the fault of those who ought to keep it up and honour it, but who do not honour it. And it is for the Curés themselves to pay diligent heed to this.

Let the Catechism be what it can and ought to be, that is to say, grave, serious, instructive, even austere, in short, let it be, in the heart of those who conduct it, apostolic, though still preserving in its form its charm and its needful attractiveness; let it thoroughly imbue souls with the great Christian doctrines; let there be nothing about it effeminate, or vain, or enervating; and then it will give the children not only, not even chiefly, the joy of pious feeling, but the taste for true virtue, the courageous acceptance of duty, the fulfilling of the commandments, the real true Christian life; this is what Catechisms of Perseverance, either for young girls or youths, ought to be, this is our idea of them, this is what we would have them be. Above all, the good Catechisms of Perseverance lay the foundations of this practical piety in the solid and serious teaching of Christianity, for without this well-grounded religion there is no true Christian man or Christian woman; it is through this that they can influence souls, inspire them, and imprint upon them the strong and holy practices of the faith.

Religious education, that is to say, the direction of the life and heart, the formation of the will, the conscience, the

character, this is the great object of the Catechism; a Catechism of Perseverance should be nothing less than a grand apostolic mission.

But for all this, gentlemen, there must be strict discipline, there must be silence, there must be perfect attention and good behaviour; if the children come when they like and as they like, if inattention and carelessness creep in, there is an end of it; everything is lost, nothing of good will find its way into their souls; the most powerful language will slide off them as on a waxed cloth.

And above all it is in what the Head Catechist says, that the children, looking to him as of weighty authority, should find their great direction for Christian life. It is his part to make them understand what is the mind of the Church, the mind of our Lord, the mind of the Saints. It is he who ought to accustom them to know the Saints, and if I may so say, to live with them; every Sunday he ought to tell them something out of the grand lives of any of the Saints whose day falls in the week, or tell them something interesting out of the history of the Church; above all, he should show them, in the example of our Lord, the perfect model of the virtues required of themselves, humility, obedience, patience, love of labour, charity. I have spoken of the works of charity in which it is good for the children to take part; I urge the point, because these are the works which will bring Christian life home to the heart of the children, and attach them firmly to the Catechism.

Such is my answer, and you see, gentlemen, that it leaves absolutely no ground for any objection.

Yes, but all this series of works and things connected with a Catechism, will it not attach the children too much to it? And then will not this give rise to another danger; what becomes of the parochial *esprit de corps?* If you make the Catechism such an important affair, and still more if you make these meetings so attractive that the young people will go to them till they are fifteen or twenty, you estrange them from the parish Church, and when later on they have become full-grown men, or mothers of families, they will never be seen

at the Church, for none of them will have been in the habit of coming to it.

Some persons seem to think there is ground for this fear, but in reality, gentlemen, it needs only a little thought to see that there is no foundation for it.

I might say, in the first place, that even should it be so—which I do not grant—many parish Churches would in ten years be just what they are now, because unfortunately, as it is, they are more and more deserted; men, in particular, who frequent them could be easily counted; and moreover, the Perseverance Catechisms cannot be charged with this desertion, because, in the parishes of which I speak, the Catechisms are as much deserted as the parochial services, and after the day of the first Communion, the children are seen there no more. In the better parishes, not a quarter of the children remain in the Perseverance Catechism, and that only for a year or two; and where are the others? Are they at the Church services?

I might repeat here again, what I do not cease to lament, that in certain parishes the children of the different schools are miserably relegated to the bottom of the Church, under the organ, or in one of the side-aisles, where they can never see anything of the holy ceremonies, scarcely ever hear a word of the Instructions, which, moreover, are not adapted to them. Certainly, I question if such a way of treating these poor children will give them a great love for the parish Church and the parochial services, or will induce them to make a practice of constantly attending them afterwards.

I am glad to add, gentlemen, that in our own diocese this most serious grievance has almost entirely come to an end.

But I put aside these painful observations, serious as they are, and I simply say: You are afraid that such well-conducted Catechisms will estrange the children from the parish Church, but for my part I know no stronger, no more certain way of bringing children to the parish Church, than well-conducted Catechisms. It is in fact remarkable, and constant experience shows it, that nowhere are the *prônes*, pastoral Instructions, and Offices attended with more zeal and eagerness than in parishes where there are good Catechisms of

Perseverance; and the reason of this is very simple; the Catechisms are a preparation for understanding and enjoying what is said and done at the parish Church.

Is it not true that generally sermons and even *prônes* take for granted a great deal of preliminary knowledge, which is mostly wanting to the mass of hearers, but which the Catechisms of Perseverance have supplied to those who have attended them?

And the Offices? What interest can the Offices of the Church have for men who have not had the sound and well-developed instruction of a Catechism of Perseverance, and therefore who have not learned what is the object of the festivals, or the meaning of the liturgical ceremonies? What do they say to them? Nothing. What are they for them? A mere spectacle of which they soon weary, because this spectacle is monotonous and wearisome to those who do not understand the spirit of it, while to those who by their thorough knowledge of religion can find in them food and light for their souls, the festivals and liturgical ceremonies are full of attraction and charm. Thus the most devout parishes in Paris, the most frequented Churches, which, vast as they are are not large enough for the congregation of the faithful, are precisely those where Catechisms of Perseverance, such as we would have them, have been long held.

Experience is decisive here, gentlemen, and the reason of it, I must again say, is obvious; is it not clear that these children, who in the long years that they have been constant at their Catechism, will have learnt not only to know their religion perfectly, but also to love it, to be attached to it with their heart and soul, to practise all its duties with zeal, is it not clear that they will one day be solid, enlightened, generous Christians, who, far from deserting their parish Church, will come to it with pleasure, and will be the joy of their pastors and the edification of their brethren?

This was one of the great advantages which Fénélon saw in the Catechisms. They give, he said, to the children and to the faithful, the taste, *not for sermons full of empty and affected ornament, but for intelligent and edifying discourses,*

such as good "prônes" and Homilies, which explain clearly the letter of the Gospel.

Fénélon considered, as did all the early Fathers, and as all zealous Pastors of the present day still consider, that without contradiction, a well-conducted Catechism is the most useful form of preaching in a parish, because it is the most instructive, the clearest, the most persuasive, and the most simple. Truly, gentlemen, if the Apostle had not taught us to know and perceive what he calls *altitudines Satanæ*, one would be amazed at all the objections invented against the Catechism of Perseverance, and the singular suspicions it has sometimes excited.

But is there not one yet more simple answer to make to all this? You are afraid that the Catechism may obscure the parish! But the Catechism is the work of the parish itself.

In every parish it is the Curé himself who should preside over and conduct the Catechism of Perseverance, and if the multitude of his engagements will not allow of this, he should show himself there, at least every Sunday, if possible. He ought to give the most important of the fatherly Admonitions, and if he thinks fit, the Instruction and the Homily. This was done at the Madeleine by M. Feutrier, M. Gallard, M. Mathieu, now Cardinal-Archbishop of Besançon; and it is still done by many Curés in Paris. The illustrious men whom I have just mentioned came every Sunday, and often in the week to our Catechisms; and without upsetting anything, or disturbing the order and rule of the exercises, they took that chief and pastoral part which belonged to them.

No doubt zeal without discretion is possible here, as elsewhere, but if Catechisms should degenerate into rivalries and struggles for influence, I should only see the fault of the men and by no means of the Catechism; and, moreover, with Priests of that sort of spirit, so contrary to real zeal, there would be no need of the Catechism to create a struggle; every part of the sacred ministry would give occasion for it.

And this again, gentlemen, is a decisive answer to a third objection that is sometimes made against Catechisms, namely,

the influence they give to the Catechists in the parish; true Pastors always perfectly understand that however important, however great may be the good done by their Vicaires, it can never damage the authority, nor the right and proper influence of any Curé worthy of the name; as he knows of everything which is done, his authority, on the contrary, his influence, and the real gratitude of the faithful for all the good which he originates and directs, are increased; and the greater the influence of his colleagues, so much the more is his own strengthened and enlarged. Therefore, to say nothing of so many other ways by which his ascendancy is secured in the parish, if a Curé only openly applauds the success of his Vicaires, he need not fear for his own influence and authority.

In fact, gentlemen, this anxiety is very miserable and frivolous. Clearly, if a Curé directs and seconds with all his strength the work of a young colleague, instead of slighting or hindering it, he is not in the least lowered in the eyes of his parishioners, rather he is honoured and thought much of; they do not only credit him with the good he does himself, but with that which he seconds; on the other hand, if he neglects what is a duty, or if there is a miserable struggle about it, they mutually injure each other, and everything is lost.

And on this subject, gentlemen, one of the Deans of chief authority in this diocese has submitted to me the following reflections, and I, in turn, think it well to communicate them to you; you will easily recognize a practical and experienced man:

In a parish in a certain *canton*, the Curé holds the Catechism for the girls, the Vicaire that for the boys.

The Curé has been thirty years in this parish, and the Vicaires have of course left at the end of every two or three years.

As each Vicaire departs, the boys, who have been educated, catechised, and confessed by the Vicaire, have been left without a Pastor, without any living link to attach them to their religious duties; for they have not known the Curé, and the Curé has not known them.

So that for thirty years, the young men, and even the full-grown men, that is to say, the entire male population, has had no close spiritual relationship with this Pastor; and among the men of his parish the Curé has been a stranger.

This result, gentlemen, is very grievous indeed; a Curé who only conducts the Catechism for the girls in his parish, and has nothing to do with the boys, does not seem to them to be their real Pastor, he has no influence whatever over them. The Pastor is the one who has diligently fed them with the bread of knowledge, who has been caring for them. And when he who has done this is changed, and goes, all this section of the flock, which at the end of a few years, means, as the Dean I have quoted so justly remarks, all the men in a parish, have, so to speak, no Pastor.

But would not a Catechism of Perseverance, held conjointly by the Curé and the Vicaires, be the remedy for this? a Catechism which should unite with the old members all the boys who are to make their first Communion that year, and any others whom we can succeed in bringing back to it, thus bringing them into direct, close, and constant communication with their Curé.

I must repeat, gentlemen, the Catechisms, which are the real cradle of the parish, are a great parochial work, and therefore the Curés should never hold aloof from them, and in my opinion, it is desirable that the Curés, instead of laying this work wholly on their Vicaires, should put their own hand to it, and as far as possible conduct it themselves, or at all events, constantly take that leading part in it which belongs to them.

But however this may be, you, gentlemen, have too much at heart the love of souls and zeal for the glory of God, not to enter into the real spirit of these things, and I should be wronging you if I supposed you capable either of neglecting what is one of your most imperious duties, or, in this great work of the Catechisms, allowing yourselves to be hindered by fears and rivalry, or by shadows, which, as you see, have no reality.

I will not therefore dwell further on this point.

FOURTH DISCOURSE.

THE NECESSITY, THE DIFFICULTY, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF CATECHISMS OF PERSEVERANCE IN THE COUNTRY.

You will perhaps say, It is true that in this diocese we do not meet with these difficulties, these objections against the Catechism of Perseverance; but we meet with many others, which to this day have prevented many of us from establishing Catechisms of Perseverance in our village parishes.

I acknowledge, gentlemen, that in this respect your devotion has not yet attained all the success one would desire. You conduct the Catechism of first Communion with a zeal which I am never weary of praising; but Catechisms of Perseverance, such as I would have them, such as the urgent need of souls calls for, have yet to be begun in many rural parishes.

Well, let us first examine, gentlemen, and see if really Catechisms of Perseverance are as necessary in the country as in towns, and then what is more important, whether in spite of difficulties to be encountered in certain parishes, they are not nevertheless quite possible and quite practicable.

I need not spend much time, gentlemen, in showing you the special necessity for Catechisms of Perseverance in our rural parishes. This necessity is only too evident. See what happens:

The greater number of your children, as you know, even more in the country than in towns, after all the pains you have lavished upon them, keep away from you and the Church, when they are no longer brought there by the necessity of making their first Communion. That is the truth. I do not dwell upon it; it goes to one's heart, if one stops to think of

it, and it would make one despair if there were no remedy for such a disaster.

But there is a remedy, and it cannot be that this work of the Catechisms of first Communion, which you have laboured in so earnestly, and sometimes with so much encouragement, should at last only give you delusive results; that it should necessarily end in bitter deception.

No, thank God, it is not so, and there is a way, in the country as well as in the town; a way, and one only, by which you can bring back your children, make the good seed which you have sown in their hearts fructify, and secure the future of your parish; this means is a Catechism of Perseverance. It is evident that if you can institute Catechisms of Perseverance in your parishes, if you are able to attract the young people of both sexes to them, and to keep them there for some years, still under your teaching and influence, then you will not have laboured in vain, and the first Communion will not be forgotten as soon as made; Christian faith and practice will be strengthened in these young souls, and you will have really brought up generations of Christians, and prepared a better future for religion in our country places.

This is the remedy, and I know of no other. Without this Catechism of Perseverance, under one form or other, your children will always slip away from you as they do now; it is an undeniable fact that young people will not persevere but when Catechisms of Perseverance have been instituted, and when they are flourishing. Times and circumstances being as they are, this is a universal experience, a practical evidence which cannot be contradicted.

But if the necessity and the good of the Catechisms of Perseverance are evident things, can the same be said of their general possibility in the small market-towns, and in the villages? This, gentlemen, is the real question.

I answer in the first place, that as to the towns, and I am speaking now even of the very smallest, the establishment of a Catechism of Perseverance can be only a question of good-will and zeal. You must not speak of inability and impossibility. One of the most experienced Curés of this diocese

has written to me thus: "Wherever these two things exist, an accumulation of young people, and a Curé and Vicaire to attract them, to interest, to discipline and to instruct them, there you have the sure elements for a flourishing Catechism of Perseverance."

You will say, it is very well for the towns, but for the villages, is not a Catechism of Perseverance a mere chimera?

For, in fact, there the Curé is alone.

There are fewer young people, they are at a distance from the Church, and often dispersed in out-of-the-way hamlets.

Their nature, their habits, their education, are all opposed to it: in the country, the first Communion being once made, generally they go no longer to school; they feel hardly anything but indifference to instruction, and particularly to religious instruction; add the incessant and hard work in which even the children are employed; after a week so spent, they all feel the need, more or less expressed, but always strongly felt, of resting, and even on the afternoons of Sunday, of giving themselves up to amusements.

It follows from this, with such natures and such habits, that all the ingenious methods which give life to the Catechism in the towns are not possible in the villages. How, for instance, can you ask or expect, from people who are tilling the soil, or learning a trade, note-books of Analyses? How can you stimulate amongst them a happy emulation for religious instruction? These young country people have neither the time, nor the aptitude, nor the previous knowledge which are such a help to pastoral zeal in the towns. All this care, all this attention may be of use to children who are accustomed to the refinements of a careful education, and of a more or less high position, but for those whose habits have taught them none of these things, for children who are without culture, and always will be, is it possible?

It may be added also, that these Catechisms not being in existence, there is no ancient custom, no traditional feeling about them, and therefore, besides all the difficulties we have just enumerated, there are also, and particularly in the country, those which result from the thing being an innovation.

You see, gentlemen, I do not try to deceive myself, or to hide the difficulties; unfortunately they are too real, and this is the reason why there are so few Catechisms of Perseverance in the country. But then again, what becomes of these young people in the country? and how long is it after the first Communion before the beershops, the love of pleasures, dancing, and the rest rob you entirely of them? Here again, how often you have confided to me your sadness in this respect!

Well, it is precisely this sadness, yours and mine, on this important point, gentlemen, which leaves me no choice, but which has made me look closer into things, has made me go to the bottom of the difficulty and the possibility of this most necessary work; and after fifteen years of reflection, of experience, and of practical consultation, I am convinced that it is not only necessary, but possible.

And I say that notwithstanding their special difficulties, Catechisms of Perseverance are possible in the country, no less than in the towns. They are possible, because they exist, and the question is not yet to be solved; it has been solved, gentlemen, and solved by yourselves.

I have before me now archidiaconal reports, and moreover, letters from yourselves to me; all this labour that you have each been working at in your parishes, all these separate efforts, scattered over the diocese, all these manifold attempts to carry on the work of souls by means of the Catechisms, I have them all here, collected together, I can take them in at one glance; well, with all these documents, all these facts before me, all these efforts of zeal which have been actually carried out, I affirm that the problem of Catechisms of Perseverance in the country has been already solved.

I have made no order; I have advised, but I have prescribed nothing; I have left you to make your own attempts, each according to his local resources and his own ideas, helping you by my encouragement, and by my experience, when I could do so. You have given yourselves to the work, gentlemen, with a zeal for which I cannot sufficiently bless God and thank you yourselves; and not only young Priests who were without experience in the holy ministry and in the

pastoral life have given themselves to it with courage and success, but also Priests, who in attempting this work have had altogether to break new ground, and to undertake an entirely different work from what they had done hitherto.

I can tell you then, gentlemen, that in one place or another, it has all been done by yourselves; all the various plans for this work, all the different methods for making it attractive and interesting, to plant it firmly and make it flourish—you have found them out, you have applied them with such devotion and have had such a blessing from God upon them that I am surprised and greatly comforted; so that I have only to give you back the experience which you have given me on this great practical question; I have only to show you what is done by yourselves, to prove to you all that can be done; I have only to gather up and state your various experiences, so that all may mutually profit by them; and by throwing light upon it, kindle yet more, if it may be, your zeal for a work which you and I can never have too much at heart; for it is a work which, if rightly conducted, must necessarily in the end result in the regeneration of the diocese.

Let me not be mistaken; I do not mean to say that everywhere, in the country, Catechisms can be organized in the same manner in every respect as in the towns. You must take into account local difficulties, also the Catechists, who may be more or less fully capable, and also the aptitude of the children; but if you carefully separate the accessories from the principle, if you can distinguish what is fundamental, in well-conducted Catechisms, from certain practices which are not essential, though they may give great interest to the work, I affirm that it is possible to establish Catechisms of Perseverance even in the smallest villages, because it has been already done in places where it was most difficult.

I declare to you, gentlemen, when I see all the pains which certain good Priests take for this one part of their ministry, the spirit with which they go on and persevere, all the details into which they enter, all the methods which they successively try, all the preparations which, besides the instructions and explanations, certain other exercises intended to enliven the

Catechism demand of them; such as little dialogues, little conferences, little lotteries, keeping certain registers for the wise and opportune distribution of rewards, and certain other obligations besides which they impose on themselves for the success of the Catechism, and of which I shall have to speak to you; in short, when I see, in the most humble parish, all the religious movement, all the pastoral life which results from a Catechism of Perseverance, with a good Priest who bears this work in his heart, who thinks of it with pleasure all the week, and who, when the day comes, conducts it with zeal and love as his most important work, I am further than ever from being convinced of the necessity of that inaction, the sadness of which certain country Priests believe themselves condemned to endure. But also more than ever I feel how necessary is the fire of zeal, for a ministry which does not consist in certain *official* acts, marked out beforehand, but which is entirely for each one to initiate; which will be done or not done, which will be nothing or will be a great deal, just as each one either quietly stays with his arms crossed, or sets his wits to work and urges himself on; and more than ever I bless God for having kindled this apostolic flame in the heart of many of you.

And I thank these excellent Priests who have not allowed themselves to be stopped by the foolish objection of the coarseness of their children, but have rather seen in it a special proof of the necessity of Catechisms of Perseverance in the country. For in fact, gentlemen, any one would see this; you cannot make a man a *good Christian* without giving him at the same time a certain *elevation*, a certain *distinction* both of soul and manners. Rudeness and coarseness ought to be softened by religion, for if they are in any way extreme, these defects are almost incompatible with a Christian spirit.

The more then the first natural education has been wanting, or even perhaps has taught them evil, the more is it necessary that Christian education should come to the help of these poor children, should lift them up, should awaken in them more delicate feelings, should teach them to honour themselves, to treat themselves with respect; and if everywhere else they are

thought nothing of, they must be made to feel that at least at the Church they are thought something of, because they are Christian children. Let religion show them this kind treatment, this affection, this respectful care, they will always have a good recollection of it, and it may be an eternal gratitude.

But what then have they done—those among whom this work has been successful in rural parishes? What methods have they employed? They have done three things:

First, gentlemen, *they have taken the initiative*, a strong and courageous initiative; they have begun, they have said: "*Dixi, nunc cœpi.*" Well, gentlemen, you must say and do the same.

Then they have spared nothing to *make the Catechism a thing to be honoured* in their parish, to give their parishioners a high opinion of it, and to make it accepted as a serious, honourable, and excellent thing: you must employ the same means as they have done.

And finally, after an attentive study of what was possible for them, and after repeated trials, they have succeeded in *finding out various ingenious means by which in the country a great interest may be given to a Catechism of Perseverance;* if you would succeed as they have done you must have recourse to the same ingenuities.

And on this, gentlemen, I will speak to you in great detail in our next discourses.

FIFTH DISCOURSE.

ON THE INITIATIVE NECESSARY FOR FOUNDING A CATECHISM OF PERSEVERANCE IN A COUNTRY PARISH.

The Initiative! the Spirit of Initiative! a grand thing in every work of zeal!

I say then, gentlemen, first of all,—and I say it with the more confidence and certainty that many of you have been equally convinced of it with myself, and do it admirably,—I say that in order to found a Catechism of Perseverance in a country parish, the first point is to feel that you have in hand a work of zeal of the highest order; a work which will not go on by itself, but to be established and maintained it needs above all the Initiative of the Curé, a strong and grand Initiative; that it is not enough to be ready gladly to receive the children, if they come, and to form a Catechism of Perseverance, if it is agreed to beforehand; but it needs labour, it means sparing yourself no trouble, and it is of the first necessity, if you would not have souls perish and religion come to nothing in your parish, that you should generously give yourself this trouble, should take this Initiative.

It must be taken with four kinds of people: the *children*, the *parents*, and also—since the state of things brings you into necessary relations with them, and makes their co-operation, to a certain extent, indispensable to you—the *schoolmasters* and *mistresses*, and also I will say, for it is important, the *masters* and *mistresses* of apprentices, either in farms or workshops.

I.

THE *Children:* No, gentlemen, you must not content yourselves with waiting for them. I must continually repeat, if they do not come of themselves, you must go to look for them, you must run after them, as a shepherd after his flock; here above all you must practise, with the zeal and affection of a good shepherd, the *compelle intrare* of the Gospel.

They escape away from us, you say: the first Communion once made, we see them no more. But is it not that we have let them go? Have we sufficiently prolonged that time in which we were certain to keep them with us by the desire of making their first Communion, when by the help of this expectation and judicious delays we could have made such deep and strong impressions on their souls, that they would have been attached to the Catechism, and would have come back to us?

They escape from us; but, in the presence of God, do we do all that is necessary for bringing them back? Do we go where they are to find them, after the example of the Master, Who spent Himself in apostolic journeys through the towns, in the villages, in the desert, on the borders of the lake, on the mountains, every place in which there were souls to whom He brought the Gospel?

The Apostle S. Paul, the great Catechist, he teaches us himself; did not he go, *per domos*, from house to house, from door to door, to teach? And we, in our turn, do we seek out these dear children in their homes, or if need be, out in their fields. These poor children who do not come back, are they not themselves the lambs, the wandering sheep of which the Gospel speaks? And what does the Good Shepherd do? Is He satisfied with being ready to receive the lost sheep when they shall return? No; He runs after them, He pursues them, He brings them back to the fold on His shoulders; this is what our Lord did, and what He would have us do.

They do not come back! we sadly mourn over it, and then soon, too soon, alas! we reconcile ourselves to it. Allow me

to tell you they would come back if we were never reconciled to their absence, if we never left off going to seek them, if we knew how to draw them to us, to make them, and also their parents, feel that we have a heart which loves them.

Ah! gentlemen, before we pity ourselves, it would often be well to examine if there is no cause for accusing ourselves.

I know there always will be children of perdition; *filius perditionis!* But also there will always be faithful sheep, and also among those who stray away there will be sheep found again, sheep brought back to the fold; and it is almost an unheard-of thing in the Church of Jesus Christ for a good shepherd ever to be left without a flock.

It will not do then only to call the children from the pulpit, but one must go oneself to seek them out, if they do not come back.

I will add, too, that they must be followed even when they leave the parish. You say that they leave your parish; be it so, rather some do, not all; but they do not leave the diocese; commend them, this again is one of those excellent ideas which I owe to several of yourselves, commend them to the Curé of the parish to which their work has taken them. "I have often thought," one of your brethren wrote to me, "that it would be useful to suggest that, together with the parish register, by means of which we know all our parishioners, there should be a special register for the children of the first Communion, so that one might keep them up, not only in the parish, but beyond it, by commending them to their new Curé, who would visit them, and let them know that they were being thought about." Why should you not do this, as many of your brethren have already done? Without a doubt, gentlemen, it is quite a pastoral idea. There are some among you, I know, who keep their young parishioners in sight, with all a mother's anxiety for her child, when they leave their village and their father's roof to fulfil their military duty to their country. These zealous Pastors always know in what garrison their poor conscripts are; they give them letters of commendation to the Curés there, or according to the different places, to the Army Chaplains, to the Presidents of the

Confraternities of S. Vincent-de-Paul, or to Priests and earnest laymen who interest themselves in work for the military. By these means, with God's blessing, it has more than once happened that these brave young soldiers not only have not become worse, but have become better in the regiment than they were in their own parish. This is what I call pastoral zeal.

II.

In the second place, gentlemen, to secure the children we must act upon the *parents*, and there are many opportunities for this; and moreover, it must be well understood that the entire object of Catechisms of Perseverance is not only to draw the children to them, but even their parents also, who are interested in what concerns their children, and who, by attending sometimes at these Catechisms, or even only by being interested about them, will find more profit than they looked for. Yes, if we know how to make use of our advantages we have, as I have already pointed out to you in one of our former discourses, we have here a valuable resource in creating our Catechisms of Perseverance, and even in holding a Catechism for grown-up persons.

"In our country places," writes a good Priest to me, "we find the fathers taking part in the religious ceremonies which concern their own children with much eagerness. For the first Communion, in the country or the town, there is hardly ever a father absent from this great ceremony. For the parents, for all without distinction, for those who do not practise their religion as well as for those who do, it is a great day, a great thing."

No doubt there may be sad exceptions to this, gentlemen, but that is only natural.

Another Curé also writes:

". . . The 27th of this month, then, I am going to summon last year's children to the Catechism of Perseverance. Their parents also are in the habit of attending these Catechisms, because they are curious and amazed to hear their children competing with each other in the dialogues in which they take part. . . . They observe those who have good marks, who win images, or gain prizes. . . . You may suppose, that while instructing the children, the chief part of the Instruction is meant for the parents. . . ."

I will say no more here, gentlemen, of the two auxiliaries who can help you much by their co-operation in the work of Perseverance Catechisms, I mean the master and mistress of the school; what I have already said about them will suffice.

I will only add one word, and that is, that if you know how to take the Initiative with them rightly, and to interest them in your work, there are two special points in which they can be of the greatest possible use to you in your Perseverance Catechism, namely, for the singing of the hymns, as you will easily understand, and also for the Analyses.

What, you will say, *Analyses!* Is it possible, then, for us to get Analyses in the country? Yes, gentlemen, if you know how to set about it. Many assert that it is not, and seem to say that here I am asking too much, and in fact, it must be granted that in many cases it is difficult. Still, is it always so, and must we absolutely give up this feature in a Catechism of Perseverance which is such an ornament and stimulant to it? Is there nothing to hope for in this respect, can nothing be attempted? Well, gentlemen, I do not believe it, and why? Because, as I told you, I have had, I still have before me Analyses, and very good Analyses, actually made by children of twelve or fourteen, in Catechisms of Perseverance, of very small parishes. Certainly, the Curé's Instruction must have been well prepared, well divided, and very clear, for the children to have thus caught and reproduced it; but it is no less true that these Analyses, excellent though different, would do honour to the most flourishing Catechisms. It is true that in the particular parish whose Analyses I am speaking of, the good Curé had an excellent master and a pious mistress, and he had been able to inspire them with a great zeal for his Perseverance Catechism. Do the same. No, gentlemen, however poor your resources may be for this particular thing, I urge you to employ them, and should you obtain only a small number of Analyses, still, in the first place, there will be a few children more thoroughly instructed; and then these Analyses, with their *different seals,* with your well-directed praise, reading them aloud from time to time, will throw over the Catechism a prestige which certainly is not to be despised.

In conclusion, I must say a very few words more on masters and mistresses of farms, or of apprentices, whether in workshops or in large factories.

In many villages, and you have often lamented it, the first Communion is no sooner made, than the parents place their children out in service in their own parish, or more frequently, in some neighbouring parish. The pastoral zeal which animates you ought to make these children the object of your special care; and in this way: At the dates when children go out to service, on S. John's or on All Saints' Day, do not fail to visit the masters of farms, or rural occupations, or the masters in workshops; go to them, make acquaintance with these new parishioners which circumstances and the exigences of labour have given you: "*Diligenter agnosce vultum pecoris tui.*" Talk to the masters, talk to the children, talk to the young men and the young women about the meeting of Perseverance, and of the means you adopt to prevent attendance at the Catechism interfering with their necessary work as servants or apprentices; urge upon the masters, and above all on the mistresses, if happily they are Christian women, that these young workpeople or young servants may have, if not every week, which one must try to obtain in every possible way, yet at least once a fortnight that they may have the time and the power to attend the parochial Instructions and the Catechism of Perseverance.

Let me say, gentlemen, in practice, we do not sufficiently look after, or treat, as our parishioners, all these workmen and workwomen who, it is true, are often only a short time in our parishes, but for whom, nevertheless, as long as they are there, we are responsible before God. And yet it is sometimes very easy to do them good. By the very fact of their being strangers, they are sometimes perhaps all the more grateful for any kindness we can show them, and they are less liable to that fear of what others will say, which is the cause of so many fallings away in our country places.

Be interested, then, about these young servants; your efforts will touch them, they will affect their masters and also their parents; and among the parents you will have the comfort of

finding some who will second you with all their power, and will support you by their own very urgent advice. Yes, tell them to advise their children earnestly, when placed in service, to keep faithfully to the Mass and the Catechisms; beg them to urge upon the masters to whom they trust them, that on Sundays they shall be allowed to attend the holy Offices and the meetings of Perseverance. When a father and mother have done this, then a Curé is able to present himself, and he will obtain from a master or mistress what, without the co-operation of the parents, he would perhaps not have obtained. Besides, would it be impossible to make these good people see how much better it will be, from the point of view of their own *interests*, to which they are so alive, for them to have steady and Christian servants?

Above all, then, gentlemen, if you desire to found a good Catechism of Perseverance in a parish, you must take the INITIATIVE. You must seek out and bring the children to the Catechism; you must interest the parents in it by these visits, and by these earnest efforts, which show a real devotion to what is dearest to them in the world; by good relations and good offices you must secure the valuable co-operation of the masters and mistresses of schools, of teachers, and of masters of workshops or farms.

But there are yet many other means, gentlemen, even in the country, of which we are now chiefly speaking, for making the Catechism of Perseverance acceptable to the parents and the children; you must know how to give it AN HONOURABLE PLACE, how to make it esteemed; and then it must be conducted in an interesting manner.

Here again, gentlemen, I only wish to quote yourselves to yourselves; and I shall speak of nothing but what is already done by the intelligent zeal of a great many of you, in this diocese; but yet again, what is done partially, and here and there, I desire to see become general and universal.

SIXTH DISCOURSE.

THE CATECHISM OF PERSEVERANCE IS TO BE HELD IN HONOUR.

I.

Our first way of having a Catechism of Perseverance held in honour is, gentlemen, to *speak of it from the pulpit*, as of a thing supremely honourable and important, and thus to *convey a great idea* of it to your parishioners; and certainly it would be worth the trouble if sometimes you took the Catechism of Perseverance as the subject of your Instructions. I would say to you, with one of the most intelligent and zealous Deans of the diocese:

"Set yourselves first to give your parishioners a very great idea, the greatest possible idea of the Catechism; fight strongly against the prejudice which exists of regarding the Catechism as a religious A B C, as a book perhaps good for children, but quite below the serious thought of a grown man. Give notice that your children will assemble after Mass or at Vespers; that you will have a pleasant dialogue to repeat to them, or an interesting story; that you will give a reward to whoever answers best, &c.; invite the parents to come, and all the people who are present at the Office to remain; then do the things which you have given notice of; and add some earnest words and perhaps recite something attractive. If you have any influential and well-conducted people in the parish, see them by themselves, and try to get them to promise to attend regularly at the Catechism, at least at the beginning, to set an example to others; having gained this, your Catechism will be established, and it will only remain for you to give it that degree of interest which will keep it up and ensure its growth."

"Among the methods I have employed," writes another Curé of the diocese, "for establishing the Perseverance Catechism—in this case, it is a small town—I have tried to make it understood that it would be some-

thing of a disgrace to the parish not to have one, and that every one who wishes to be respected, or to do honour to his good education, ought to belong to it. This method has been very successful among the young girls, they think it an honour to come to the Catechism of Perseverance. Only two in the town do not come to it, and they are less thought of in consequence."

This happy idea of speaking from the pulpit on the Catechism of Perseverance, making all understand its great advantages, and inspiring a great esteem for it, has been successful, and it ought to be so; and to be able to develop such a theme with success does not really demand exceptional eloquence.

Another of you has employed the following means to attract his children to the Catechism of Perseverance, after the first Communion. I need not say, gentlemen, that every one can and ought to choose out such means as are best suited to his parish and his children. In telling you of such and such a thing practised by your brethren, I impose nothing. One of you then has written to me:

"1. I make attendance at the Catechism of Perseverance an article of the rule of life marked out at the time of the first Communion, and a very honourable reward is given every month for the observance of this article.

"2. I show them what advantages they gain from the Indulgences attached to the attendance at the Catechism and the prayers there recited —for this purpose we are affiliated to the Association of Perseverance at Langres.

"3. I try to make them see that they need this help if they are to be really instructed in their religion, and respected for their solid education."

There are other good Priests, gentlemen, who, anxious to found a Catechism of Perseverance, and searching out all their possibilities, and studying their parish in every sense, have made use of certain local customs to attain their object.

A Curé writes to me thus:

"I despaired last year of being able to establish a Catechism of Perseverance, when, last October, I perceived that the population had a very pronounced liking for evening pursuits. So, thinking I could enter into their views, I announced that there would be a grand gathering at the

Church every Sunday evening till Easter, and I called these gatherings *Evenings of Nazareth.*[1]

"My summons was listened to, and every Sunday evening I saw a good number of women, girls and children, and several men assembled in the Church. The number has varied from 60 to 140; generally there were about 100.

"This exercise lasted one hour. We began by using the *chapelet*, saying two prayers, one for the conversion of sinners, the other for the souls in Purgatory, then a hymn, and an interesting conference. We ended by a collection to provide for the lighting of our meetings. All I offered them was the singing some beautiful hymns, the interest I try to give to my little Instructions, and the distribution of some books to provide them with reading at home for the week."

All these, gentlemen, are excellent methods for making a Catechism of Perseverance attractive, but there are yet many others. In order to make the Catechism of Perseverance a thing to be greatly honoured, you have yourselves found out and applied admirable stimulants and methods, with unfailing effect; and when I see this variety of resources which we have in our power, it would be difficult to persuade myself, even if there were no experience witnessing to their power, that either one or other of these numerous methods, successively or simultaneously employed with perseverance and patience, would not at last produce some weighty result.

II.

THESE stimulants are *Privileges, Dignities, Rewards, Festivals,* even *Games,* and good and pleasant *Diversions.* At the same time, and with equal fertility of invention, you have been able to impart a very strong interest to the meetings themselves, and to create a great respect for the Catechism, by ingenious methods, and by exercises which charm and attract both parents and children.

[1] This reminds me of an excellent custom in Christian Savoy, which one wishes could be introduced into our villages. In Savoy, the Catechism is taught at home, in the evenings. The father or mother, or perhaps the grandfather or grandmother, or sometimes an elder sister or an aunt, hear the children repeat the Catechism. Sometimes several families join for this purpose. This is how a Christian spirit is kept up in families.

Let us speak in succession, gentlemen, of all these ingenuities of pastoral zeal.

I see by your letters, and I greatly approve of it, that some of you, with a view of making the Catechism be honoured by all the parish, have attached to it the following *Privileges:*

"The Catechism has its banner, and walks first in processions; in the Church, at the Office, the Catechism has a place of honour; *Pain bénit* is given to the *Dignitaries* of the Catechism, as to the Dignitaries of Confraternities; the children of the Catechism are sometimes allowed to form processions, or even, if it can be done, the whole Catechism is taken on some beautiful pilgrimage or excursion. If a child of the Catechism dies, the whole Catechism assembles for his funeral."

Another Curé writes:

"Two things seem to me to be very good for making a Catechism of Perseverance prosper in a country place; they have produced the best effect here:—A procession from time to time, in the evening after Vespers, to the Altar of the Blessed Virgin, dressed in white and carrying lighted candles; the gathering together of all the members at the death of any one of them; they accompany the body of their companion, dressed in white, and preceded by their banner, draped in black."

Another way: At the *prône*, the children who have distinguished themselves at the Catechism are mentioned by name, to the great satisfaction and quite legitimate pride of the parents.

Also at the *prône* are announced certain exercises of the Catechism, of which I shall speak presently, such as *Dialogues, Conferences, Examinations*, and the parents are invited to come to them.

"The children of the Catechism, boys and girls," writes one of you, "wear badges of honour, the boys a cross or a medal, the girls a medal; with ribbons of different colours, blue, green or white, according to rank or age."

Independently of these badges, which some Curés give to the children of the Catechism of Perseverance, it is essential to institute Dignities and Dignitaries.

One Curé writes:

"In my Catechism is a *Superintendent* for the boys; the badge of his dignity is the cipher of Mary on red silk. One for the girls; she wears a pretty medal on a red ribbon. A *Secretary* for the boys: A cipher on rose-

coloured silk. A *Secretary* for the girls: A cipher on rose-coloured ribbon. *The boys' Choir:* Blue silk. *The girls' Choir:* Blue ribbon.—*The Heads of the Form* (boys) have their cipher on green silk, and (girls) on green ribbon."

In a letter from another Curé I read:

"The four Dignitaries have the first places in the seats reserved for the children in the Church.

"In the Church, their duty is to keep watch over the other children during the Offices, to point out to them in their book what is being sung; and for this purpose *they ought, before the Office, to consult the table of notices placed at the entrance of the Church.* They each mark, on a list *ad hoc*, the names of the children who are absent, who come late, who talk, or who do not follow properly with their books.

"At the parochial *asile*, they take care of the small children, arrange their games for them, and tell the Curé what goes on in his absence."

In some Catechisms an honour list is put on the Church door, and great is the desire of each to see his own name there. One can imagine it, for as one Curé, who does this, writes to me:

"The parents, as they come into Church, look eagerly through the list, and are proud if they find the name of their own child there."

Another very effective way of throwing honour on a Catechism is by means of the *Festivals*. The Catechism has its festivals. As you know, gentlemen, nothing can be more charming, more pious, more fitted to make impression on souls than our Catechism festivals at Orléans; but why should they be less charming and less enjoyed in the country than in the town?

I have myself presided at one of these fêtes, in this diocese, in a very poor country village with four hundred and fifty inhabitants; and there I found in use every method of emulation which I have pointed out to you. The *President* and the *Secretary* read to me a report, aloud. I was shown *Analyses*, made during the last three months by boys and girls, and rewarded by *seals of green, white, and red*, and by the *Grand Seal*, as at Orléans, in the Catechisms of Perseverance attached to the Cathedral, and S. Paul and S. Paterne. I carried away these Analyses, and I have them still; they are evidently made by the children, and I am ready to show them to any

one of you who may wish to see them. At that time, one hundred and seventy-five Easter Communions were made in the parish. Another Curé has come who has dropped the Catechism of Perseverance; and now, hardly any one even attends at Mass. So, do not neglect, gentlemen, this great attraction of the festivals; make them as beautiful as possible; put all your heart and soul into it.

"In a rural parish of this diocese, the Catechism keeps five great festivals in a very special and solemn way: (1) All Saints, the opening festival; (2) Christmas; (3) The patronal festival of the Catechism held on the Sunday before Septuagesima; (4) Easter; (5) the Assumption, which is the closing festival.

"We celebrate these festivals as follows: A Mass of Communion, with many hymns, is said in the morning. There is a meditation in common beforehand, and afterwards the Act of Thanksgiving, also in common.

"In the evening there are more hymns than usual, and *Billets* belonging to the festival are recited and explained."

This, gentlemen, is all done in a country parish. I have a letter from the Curé of another country parish. He says:

"Our Catechism has its festivals; general Communion in the morning, with hymn-singing and exhortation; and in the course of the day, something out of the common: a *pleasant spiritual reading*, a *story*, a *dialogue*, a *procès-verbal*, a *conference;* at *Christmas* we have the *fête of the shepherds;* and a *sale of books and images*, bought with good marks: this is the groundwork of our festivals."

There are Curés who, not having a special Chapel for the Catechism, or not being able to celebrate its festivals but in connection with the parochial Services, have turned this hindrance into an advantage by inviting the whole parish, and thus interesting them in these festivals.

In connection with the festivals, *rewards* are another great attraction of the Catechism. In the first place, the festivals should always close with a distribution of rewards. A Curé writes:

"At the four great festivals of the Catechism (the first Communion, Easter, S. Denis, the patron of the parish, and Christmas), and every time that there is a general repetition of one of the divisions of the Catechism, we have an extra distribution of rewards, besides the solemn distribution of prizes, given to those who have fulfilled the conditions fixed on by the rule."

There are even Curés who give out rewards every Sunday. And what do these rewards consist of?

"We have images, medals, chapelets, crosses, statues, bénitiers, little books, and sometimes," adds my correspondent, "little specimens of turnery made by the Curé himself in the sight of the children, during the recreation times of the Week-day Catechism."

Several Curés have adopted an excellent method for distributing these rewards, which produces, they tell me, and I am not surprised at it, the strongest emulation in the Catechism. Borrowing a custom which is practised in public works, and in some benevolent societies (*les saint familles, les patronages*), where it succeeds admirably, and it should be no less attractive to country people than to townspeople, these rewards are distributed under the form of a *Lottery*. Sometimes, as a reward for mere attendance, and regularity in coming, each child present draws a number.

"At other times, only those who have a certain number of good marks, fixed by the rule, have the right to draw. I arrange on a table, in the first row, some nicely-bound devotional books . . . and in the second row a series of books of the same kind, but not quite so well bound, then some suitable little images. The young people who have attended the Catechism regularly draw from the books of the first category. The most regular either draw or choose the books, whichever they please. . . . I proceed in the same way for the books of the second category. . . . I so manage that even those who have attended very little shall still have something which shall encourage them to do better in future."

"Every Sunday," writes another Curé, "at the close of the Catechism of Perseverance, after the prayer, we have a *distribution of rewards in the form of a lottery*. The Dignitaries draw four numbers; those who have the *very good* mark draw three; *good*, two; *fair*, one. *Those who have had a bad mark* that day *take no part in the lottery* for this Sunday."

It is easy to see what animation may be given to the Catechism by these lotteries, sometimes even pleasant merriment, by skilful surprises, which it is easy to manage. Forgive me, gentlemen, a familiar detail, but it may be useful to give you an idea how this excellent device of lotteries can be turned to account for exciting and brightening a Catechism. In a Catechism for boys, which was held in the large hall belonging to the school, a closed box was one day placed on the table,

together with the other objects of the lottery. The child who was called up to choose first, of course took the mysterious box; and you may imagine the general merriment when, having opened it, he drew out by the ears, before them all, a large live rabbit! Certain it is, gentlemen, that in the societies of the *Sainte-Famille*, in Paris, the pious laymen who conduct them do obtain incredible results, both with grown men and old men, as well as with children and young people. And I cannot enough praise some of you for the excellent thought of imparting the character of these works to your Catechism of Perseverance. It is quite possible everywhere, in the country or in towns.

Independently of these ordinary and extraordinary rewards, nearly all of you, gentlemen, follow the good custom of having a solemn distribution of prizes once a year, all the children being rewarded according to merit. There are some, I know, who think that honour is a sufficient motive for emulation. Still, as I would not blame those who think they can do without this stimulant of rewards, which is so powerful with children and young people, and even for those of riper years; so also, gentlemen, I must ask them not to blame their brethren whose zeal and generosity lead them to employ it. I have seen this sometimes, gentlemen, and it comes back to my remembrance now, the strange susceptibility, which I was one day witness to, a long time ago, in a Curé, in other respects an excellent man. His zealous young Vicar, not wishing to bring expense on the fabric fund or on the Curé, had bought books with his own money for a distribution of prizes at his Catechism of Perseverance; and, which was unpardonable, he had given for the first prize a book which cost three francs. "Imagine that," said this worthy Curé to me, "it is unreasonable! I should," he added, "have forbidden such a thing, if I had known of it. But my Vicar took good care to say nothing about it to me." But still, gentlemen, do you imagine that the necessary expense of these prizes would be very considerable? One of you who has given them away largely, tells me what he has had to spend. How much a year do you suppose he needs? Forty-one francs is enough for him; and

surely that is not an impossible sum! And besides, in many parishes one would certainly find charitable people who would not refuse to help.

III.

Among you, gentlemen, are some who do yet more; with a zeal which I can only praise and recommend to be imitated, they have organized, for Sunday afternoons and evenings, meetings for games, such as battledore, bowls, skittles, &c.; these are held, for the boys, either at the Presbytery or at the school-master's house; and for the girls, with the school-mistress or with the Sisters. Nothing pleases and gratifies the children more.

Gentlemen, under another name and another form, this is the same thing as those works which are so necessary and which are now so often met with under the names of *Patronage, Work for the Young, S. Joseph,* &c.; these are works which have all a similar object, namely, to preserve children and young people from bad and dangerous diversions, by the charm of harmless and good amusements. Nearly everywhere the good Sisters do what they can to bring the young girls together at their house on Sundays. It is very much to be desired that the Curés could do something similar for the boys; that the Presbytery, in default of any other special place, should be a place of meeting for young lads on Sunday, and that before and after Vespers they should come and amuse themselves at the Curé's house. Amusement is absolutely necessary for young people; to offer them innocent amusements, under the wing of religion, is both to draw them away from the attraction of dangerous pleasures, and to attach them to virtue and to religion; and at the same time you give a very strong support to the Catechisms of Perseverance. One of my greatest wishes, gentlemen, is to see these Sunday gatherings become more and more general in every parish of the diocese.[1]

[1] It is obvious that we cannot enter here into the detail of every method which intelligent and devoted zeal can use to further the perseverance of

It is needless to say that these gatherings should always be supervised, and accompanied by a short religious Instruction

young people: but there is one, so important, so marvellously adapted to the needs of their age, and now employed with so much success in a great many towns and villages in France, that we should blame ourselves if, in a book of this nature, we did not speak of it: namely, the works called *Œuvres de la Jeunesse.*

The first work of this kind, as far as we know, established in France, dates from 1799, and after so many years it exists still, numerous and flourishing, and the fact of this astonishing prosperity and continuance is of itself sufficient evidence of the excellence of its organization and its methods. It was founded and directed for thirty-seven years, at Marseille, by a holy Priest, M. Jean-Joseph Allemand, whose name, absolutely unknown beyond Provence during his life, has since his death, in 1836, attained a very great notoriety in France. The life of this admirable Priest was given to the public quite recently, by M. l'Abbé Gaduel (Paris, *Lecoffre,* 1 vol. in 12mo., 1868). I will describe this work, and show what was the idea of its pious founder, and his manner of directing it.

Imagine a very large place; a large house, halls, walks for recreation, and a Chapel capable of holding five hundred young people. This place is open to them every evening at five o'clock. Children coming out of school, young people after their work, all come to this blessed house, where they find, together with the charms of good friendships, pleasant and innocent recreations. They play, they walk, they talk, in the walks out of doors in the summer, in the halls in winter; any one desiring it can go to pray before the Blessed Sacrament; then, at the close of the evening, there is a devotional exercise lasting half an hour, with some spiritual reading, always commented on by the Director. On Thursday, which is a holiday at the schools, the *Œuvre* is open to the children from one o'clock. In the morning of Sundays and festivals, there is the little Office of the Holy Virgin, a quarter of an hour's meditation, the Mass, followed by announcements and some short Admonitions if there is occasion for them; in the afternoon, the Vespers of the Holy Virgin, an Instruction from the pulpit, the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and Admonitions. In the evening, before the close, another short devotional exercise, lasting ten minutes or a quarter of an hour at most. For all the long time between these exercises, they play and amuse themselves in the best possible way. All young people are admitted, from childhood up to marriage. They even make their first Communion there, and the Bishop allows them to make their Easter Communions there. After marriage, they send them away to their parishes, and these young men, who have been brought up in so Christian a manner, turn out most excellent parishioners.

As yet I have only described the exterior of this work. Now for the interior. M. Allemand was nearly the whole day in his room, waiting ("*d'arrache-pied,*" as he said,) for his dear lads. He had trained them to confess, most of them every week, but at least once a month. He maintained, with a conviction founded on experience, that without very frequent Confession the young cannot persevere. Communions were in proportion to this frequency of Confession. Besides Confession, the holy man was always, from morning to night, at the disposal of the young people, to receive them, to listen to them, and to give them all the advice and counsel which they could possibly need. He made them all promise, immediately after the first Communion, to make a little meditation every

and a few prayers. The master, the Sacristan even, some trustworthy men or youths of the parish, can be useful helpers.

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morning, and also to keep up some other practices of devotion, greater or less according to their own power and their good-will. His direction tended: (1) to make all his young disciples true and sound Christians, capable of after perseverance through life; (2) to excite and lift up to a higher degree of virtue those who were capable of it; (3)—and this was his most powerful means for promoting and keeping up fervour in his work—to inspire the most advanced and the most pious of these young men with *the spirit of zeal;* to unite them in special societies, which he directed very closely and with infinite care, and to make use of them to do good to the rest. It was these young people, devoted and full of zeal, who set the children at games, who watched over them, who set them good examples, gave them good advice, and kept up a good spirit throughout the whole work. It was by these great and wise methods that M. Allemand succeeded (to say nothing of a great number of excellent Priests, the fruit of his direction) in giving to the town of Marseille thousands of admirable fathers of families, and when he died, to leave behind him a work so solidly and so Christianly constituted, that it seems, so to speak, to defy time; and now, thirty-three years after the death of its founder, it exists, as prosperous and even more numerous than during his life; a decisive answer to those who would pretend that if you make a work too Christian you will never have great numbers. The truth is, that if you would have true Christianity in a work, you must go slowly, and not seek for numbers at first. M. Allemand began with four. But, going slowly, and implanting a Christian spirit, the foundation is first made sound, and then the numbers will follow.

I was anxious to give a good description of the oldest, the largest, and the most perfect of our *Œuvres de Jeunesse* in France, in order to give you the ideal of the model, an ideal, moreover, which is still a living reality. But I can easily see that it will not be possible always and everywhere to do as much as this, or to work on so grand a scale. But the idea being given, it is for each to apply it for himself as he best can, and according to the possibilities of various circumstances and places. I strongly advise all who wish to found *Œuvres de Jeunesses* to read and meditate on the *Life of M. Allemand*, where they will find, in minutest detail, the principles of the direction of this great master of youth, his method, and the whole organization of his beautiful work. I recommend them also to read an *Etude* at the end of this *Life*, by M. l'Abbé Gaduel, on the methods for adapting M. Allemand's idea to small towns and even to the smallest country parishes. All circles are not of the same size; there are large, lesser, and small ones; but if they are to be circles, they must all have the same geometrical properties, and only differ by the length of the radius. We live in an age when evidently the future will be to those who can get possession of the young. Never did the spirit of evil make greater efforts to pervert youth; it is for us to make contrary efforts, to employ all means, old and new, to help our children to make excellent first Communions, and to keep steadfast afterwards.

Of all these means the *Œuvres de Jeunesse* is undoubtedly one of the most powerful. M. Allemand said, in speaking of his work: "Here we play and we pray;" and again: "Young people must have amusements."

And, moreover, according to the place, the circumstances, and the age of the young people, one can also give them, besides the attraction of games, lessons in music and plain-song, short lectures in history and geography, physic and chemistry, &c. This, however, must be managed with discretion, and so as not to wound the feelings of the school-master, but rather, if possible, to act in concert with him. These gatherings of young people, under the direction of the Curés, will be a great aid to Perseverance. They must of course be gratuitous. Many Curés in the diocese have held them; they did not speak of Confession, and yet for Easter, *all* their pupils presented themselves, and several were eighteen, twenty, and twenty-five years of age. You see, gentlemen, what results you may gain from these kind of meetings.

And I may add, that while they are giving occupation to your children and your young people during the dangerous Sunday evenings, they will by and by be giving you the means for hearing the praises of God sung not only by those who sing for wages, but by free and willing voices—another great advantage!

However this may be, and however modest your Catechism of Perseverance may be, endeavour, gentlemen, to give it all the outward *éclat* and importance that you can; treat it as, and make the children feel it to be, an important thing; exalt it in every way; let it appear to the children and to every one to have, if I may so say, a certain character of dignity about it. Be very much in earnest about all its concerns. Give it its *Dignitaries*, its *Procès-Verbal*, its *Badges*. Take good care not to think the question of the Procès-Verbal, still less that of the Badges, as of no consequence.

"I am convinced," writes again one of yourselves, and with much reason, "that a certain number of distinctions—I like better to use the word which comes to my lips, *decorations*—given to some, would be a great stimulant to emulation. For the girls I have thought of a medal of

If we only offer them Catechisms and prayers, they will not come for long, nor will there be many of them; offer them games also, and we shall easily keep them with us, to instruct them, to sanctify them, to enable them to persevere. Establish everywhere good Catechisms and *Œuvres de Jeunesse*, and we shall see wonders.

the Holy Virgin, very well designed, silvered, or better still, in silver; this would be hung round their neck by a ribbon, of different colours, according to the dignity, rose-coloured, blue, or green. For the boys, I have thought of the cipher of Mary embroidered on some material, also of different colours, according to the dignity. This decoration could be fastened to their dress as they wished."

These things succeed, gentlemen, in the most important places of education, at the *Sacré-Cœur*, and at the *Petit-Séminaire;* and I maintain that they would have yet more influence over village children.

Together with distinctions and *Rewards*, there are corresponding punishments, which can be used with great effect if in the hands of a Curé who is a man of authority and decision. Concerning these, one of you writes:

"The punishment for the Dignitaries is, to be superseded. A Superintendent has been superseded for having failed to be present at Vespers, being absent with three other children who had drawn him away. In the course of the last four years, the names of two boys (children of the choir) have been effaced from the *Tableau d'honneur*, on account of their inattention at the Offices several times in one month."

Still, these punishments should only be used with great reserve in voluntary Catechisms, such as are Perseverance Catechisms, for fear of driving away the children by hurting their own or their parents' feelings.

There are many ways, you see, gentlemen, for putting a Catechism into an honourable position; and once again, these are not merely theoretical notions, which cannot possibly be applied to the realities and difficulties of various places and people—they are certainly *practical*, because they have all been *practised*.

But these are not the only ones; the resources of zeal are not yet exhausted, as I will show you at our next meeting.

SEVENTH DISCOURSE.

HOW TO ARRANGE A CATECHISM OF PERSEVERANCE WITH SKILL, AND DIRECT IT WITH ZEAL.

You have seen, gentlemen, that both children and parents can be given an interest in the Catechism, whether you reach them through self-interest or through affection; and also they can be attracted to it, they can be attached to it, I do not say at once and without trouble, or without lengthened efforts, and perseverance and patience; no, it takes time to move these indifferent and suspicious country minds; but once again, you *can* succeed, because others *have* succeeded; and once well established, it will be easy to continue it and make it lasting, by the very fact that habit and custom will here be a help. And now, of what elements, in what form is this Catechism of Perseverance to be composed? How, when, and where are we to carry out this work? I am about to show you.

I.

In towns, gentlemen, as we have seen, those who are admitted to the Catechism of Perseverance are—

1. *All children who have made their first Communion.* If very numerous, they are divided into three classes: the new *Persévérants*, who have made their first Communion in the same year; the old *Persévérants*, these form by far the largest number; and the *Dignitaries*, both old and new.

You may imagine what a source of edification all this is to the still younger children in the neighbourhood.

The Catechists, then, should openly encourage and praise the zeal of the members, and particularly the elders among them; the first places should always be reserved for them, and the handsomest rewards, the first prizes, privileges, &c. From them, also, the *Dignitaries* should be *exclusively* chosen.

2. The children who are to make *their first Communion in the course of the year* are also admitted to the Catechism of Perseverance. This plan is not universally followed, for instance, in towns where there are too many children, or where sometimes there is not room in the Catechism Chapel; but for my own part, I think it an excellent plan in parishes where it is possible, and in the country, particularly, it is indispensable.

I have given elsewhere some reasons for this; I would repeat them with more detail. The children who have already had the instruction and training of certainly one year, and generally of two or three years of the preparatory Catechism, will quite understand, immediately on their admission to the Catechism of Perseverance, that this admission is an honour to them; that the first Communion, which they will soon have the happiness of making, if they fit themselves for it, will no longer allow them to be treated—nor must they look upon themselves—as little children; that henceforth they must be sensible, zealous, above all pious, after the example of their elder brothers or sisters. The festivals at which they will assist, the monthly Communions which they will witness, will make them long with all their heart for the happy day when they themselves will take their place at the angelic Table. Everything which they see, everything which they hear, will gradually lift them up to Christian life, and to the love of our Lord. There they will naturally become accustomed to it, and they will feel, as it were, bound to come again to the Catechism of Perseverance. The very day after their first Communion, they will be *Persévérants*, and treated as such, and the next year they will all the more willingly enrol themselves with the rest, because they already know the honour, and have enjoyed the happiness of perseverance. Moreover, these children are not simply attendants at the

Catechism of Perseverance. They take a real and active part in it, and the Head Catechist ought to question them with the greatest care, and throughout the year make them go back on the fundamental questions of the Catechism, making use of the "*bons points*" with them, which they will gain or lose, according as they answer well or ill.

In the country villages, gentlemen, *the children who in any year are preparing to make their first Communion, should be,* as one of you has expressed it, *the basis of the Catechisms of Perseverance.* The chief difficulty in these Catechisms is to secure the attendance of the boys; but do you not see that in the Catechisms of first Communion you have a nucleus ready formed, to which others will most naturally join themselves? And supposing that even with these taken together the numbers are too few? Then make one company of the boys and the girls. Many of you, and those the most experienced, have done this, and are well satisfied with it. That the Catechism, whether of first Communion or of Perseverance, can be profitably held simultaneously for boys and girls, both in town and country, is not only my opinion, it was the practice of S. François de Sales, and of the holiest Catechists I have known; it is also the very decided opinion of a man in this diocese who has perhaps the largest experience in this ministry. I will quote the exact words of his letter:

"On Sunday I have the boys and girls together. It seems to me that if no inconvenience is found to result from this union on Sundays, and in my opinion no inconvenience does result from it, it might always be so. If this custom became general, a double advantage would probably be gained. The labour of the Curés would be lightened by one half, and there would be more emulation amongst the children. In the small parishes, especially, I think this innovation would be most desirable."

And, gentlemen, those amongst you who have taken the greatest pains about this work, and who have the light both of zeal and of experience, have quickly recognized the necessity of this practice. Another of your number, a village Curé, writes to me:

"My Perseverance Catechism is mixed. Only in the first year did I have the boys and girls separately. Now, one Catechism takes in all the

children. No inconvenience has resulted from this, and it is perhaps the only possible condition of existence for *a Catechism of Perseverance for boys, in a country place.*"

Again, in the following letter from one of your brethren, you will see the complete organization of a Perseverance Catechism, according to the method I have just been recommending, and this in a very small parish:

"My Perseverance Catechism is composed (1st) of the children of the Catechism for first Communion; (2nd) of the boys and girls who made their first Communion the year before. They come to it pretty regularly; *unless they attend, the solemn renewal of their first Communion is not made, as a rule;* (3rd) of children above fourteen years of age: five or six boys from fourteen to eighteen; five or six girls the same; five or six girls from twenty to thirty. Besides this number *on the books*, there are generally other persons, girls or women, who attend voluntarily. At the Catechism fêtes the Church is often full.

"This Catechism is held every Sunday, in the Church. Since you yourself gave me the advice, nearly a year ago, it has been held simultaneously for the boys and girls, and it is this which has made it succeed. Formerly I had it separately for each. Like a child I obeyed your advice, not without some repugnance; my own taste preferred separation. Obedience has succeeded. I thank God that I deferred to your opinion. A Catechism for boys only is almost impossible in a small parish: but joining it to the Catechism for girls, it goes on and prospers. There is an *Intendant* for the boys, and one for the girls; a secretary for the boys and for the girls, and also for the heads of the forms and for the Choir. The *procès-verbal* is written by each secretary in turn."

In another rural parish, the Catechism of Perseverance is organized as follows:

"We divide into three classes, which are as so many steps, mounted successively, according to the progress made in knowledge and goodness: the 1st class is for the postulants, and their name is simply entered; the 2nd is for novices, who have a distinctive costume for the ceremonies in which they take part, white in summer, blue in winter; these, also, as a distinctive mark, wear a blue ribbon round the neck; the 3rd class is composed of those who are finally admitted; they have the same costume as the 2nd class, but for a distinctive mark have a blue scarf worn across. The president is chosen by a majority of voices. These young girls assist at all the solemn processions, even at that of the Blessed Sacrament, the first Sunday in the month, preceded by their banner; to be of those chosen to carry the banner and its insignia is a reward much coveted."

Here, gentlemen, you have an entirely different organization, and new names. You will see at once that I neither impose the organization nor the names. I say again, I prescribe nothing. Invent what you like, provided it is good. I only desire to show you that methods of action are not lacking, and also how inventive and ingenious is true zeal.

II.

You have now the organization for Catechisms of Perseverance in the country. And now, as to the place for it?

Where is this Catechism to be held, and when?

One thing, gentlemen, which I value above all for Catechisms, is, as you know, though I will repeat it, a *Chapel for the Catechisms*. Several of you have had the happiness of building one, and I cannot be too thankful to them for such zeal. The real place for a Catechism is, then, a Chapel, adorned, closed—at least set apart and guarded—where the children all assemble, are all gathered under the eye of their Pastor, where they feel themselves, so to speak, at home, and their souls in a sacred refuge.

Therefore, if you have not a beautiful Chapel, special and separate, it is in the Church that you must hold your Catechism of Perseverance, and in a suitable place in the Church, that is to say, in a place of honour, in the choir or in the sanctuary. And if even you have a special Chapel for the Catechism, yet the Catechism of which we are speaking, that of Perseverance, must evidently be held in the Church, if, as we are about to explain, you desire to join it to the public Office, and make it profitable to all the parishioners.

But at what time should this Catechism be held?

I am speaking now particularly of country parishes. Well, the practice of many of you on this point is really excellent. They join the Catechism of Perseverance to Vespers, and, *in general*, it must be so; they place the Catechism after, or better still, before Vespers. I say after, or better before Vespers, because in some parishes the hamlets are so far from

the Church, that many of you find there are difficulties about the children's return home after Vespers in winter, when night comes on quickly. In the winter, then, I can understand that it is better to hold it before Vespers, and even to make Vespers earlier; and generally it is well not to have too long a time between Mass and Vespers, so that those who live in the distant hamlets may stay on for Vespers.

But I must add, gentlemen, that in *country parishes, the best time for the Catechism of Perseverance* is neither before nor after, but WITH VESPERS; for this great and unanswerable reason, that then *the parents, the grown-up people of the parish, can profit by it.*

This, in short, is my idea:

Do not hold your Catechism of Perseverance either before or after Vespers; for *Vespers should be included in the Catechism,* and form a part of it.

Speaking for myself then, if I had to hold a Catechism on Sunday afternoon, in a country parish, this is how I should always proceed:

I should put forward the hour for Vespers and the Catechism.

I should begin with a hymn to be sung by all present; then a child, standing on a raised platform, would read out the *procès-verbal* of the last meeting; I should give a report of the Analyses; the children of the first Communion would repeat the Catechism, and I should use the *bons points* with them.

Then I should have Vespers chanted, *by the children* and the parents, and not be too long about it; and if necessary, with the permission of my Archdeacon, I should confine myself to the Little Vespers without Compline.

Then I should give the Instruction, in a lively and interesting way, for twenty minutes; after that another hymn; then the repetition of the Gospel, and the Homily, lasting seven or eight minutes; and I should conclude all by a *Salut,* well sung *by the children.*

This, gentlemen, is the way I should conduct things, on all ordinary Sundays, and on fête-days I should bring into play

all the inventions of zeal of which we have spoken; and I should then believe myself certain to make my Catechism of Perseverance succeed, even were I Curé of the smallest parish in the diocese.

But, some will perhaps say, who have not had experience, is there not a danger here? Instead of drawing the parishioners to the Catechism of Perseverance, do we not run the risk of driving them away from Vespers?

It is very easy, gentlemen, to imagine this danger.

But in the first place, unhappily, the neglect of Vespers by the faithful, independently of any Catechism, is only too universal a fact. When you chant Vespers, how many people have you, in your country villages? You have told me that often you have only four or five. Draw your young people there by all the attractions of a well-organized and well-conducted Catechism of Perseverance, and far from driving away the grown-up people, you will see them coming to it of their own accord. They will not come for the Office alone, but they will come for the Catechism and hymns, when joined to the Office. And besides, the Office itself will be much better sung; shorten it by not letting the singing drag; finish by the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament; I will answer for it to you, gentlemen, that the Catechism, well settled in the parish, esteemed and honoured as it ought to be, raised in public opinion by *privileges, honours, rewards, processions, fêtes,* by all the means we have spoken of, and others of which we are just about to speak, *hymns, questions, conferences, dialogues, examinations,* by all these things the Catechism will attract your parishioners, they will come to it both for their own sakes, and for the sake of their children.

I am quite convinced that it is the great and the only way to secure attendance at Vespers, to save Vespers in many parishes. All experience is decisive on this point.

One of the most experienced Curés in this diocese writes to me as follows on this subject:

"The Catechism of Perseverance held in the afternoon, jointly with Vespers and the *Salut,* would have the advantage, particularly in small country parishes, where attendance at Vespers has almost ceased, of

bringing back part of the population to the Church, on Sunday afternoons.

"Taking the boys and girls together is attended with no inconvenience, when it is in the public Office, taken with Vespers and the *Salut*.

"In this case the Catechism should be *short:* Vespers, the Catechism, and the *Salut* should not occupy more than *seven quarters of an hour*. In towns it has been found possible to make the Catechisms very long and very interesting; but in the country, the problem to be solved is to give very interesting instructions and very sound, but very short."

Another Curé writes as follows:

"I hold the Catechism on Sunday, at two o'clock, because the greater number of children, coming from distant hamlets, could not conveniently come at another hour. Besides, these children bring with them something to eat, as they do on other days, and remain in the class-rooms, which are heated in the winter. High Mass begins at half-past ten. After Mass, the children go back to the class-rooms till the Catechism. The Catechism and Vespers begin at two o'clock, and are over before four. If they were later, the greater number of the children would not have sufficient light for their return home."

"The Catechism is held on Sunday," another Curé writes, "and is thus arranged; (1) Prayer; (2) a hymn; (3) some Admonitions; (4) a second hymn; (5) Instructions; (6) another hymn; (7) the repetition of the Gospel and the Homily; (8) Little Vespers and the *Salut;* (9) Prayer, and the parting hymn."

Therefore, gentlemen, the great thing, the sure plan, is TO HOLD THE CATECHISM AT THE SAME TIME AS VESPERS, so that VESPERS FORM PART OF THE CATECHISM.

Finally, if less fortunate than others of your brethren, you absolutely cannot with any success hold your Perseverance Catechism at Vespers, hold it at High Mass; have a sort of Catechism at High Mass. Yes, at High Mass, at the time for, and instead of the *prône*. This will perhaps surprise some of you. It is, however, a very simple thing: most simple, most useful, and most practical. You will thus be holding a Catechism, not only for the children, but for the parents and all the parish, following out a plan of Instructions on Dogma, on Morals, on the Sacraments, and the Sacrifice. And without contradiction, it will be the best way in which you can fulfil the great duty of your charge towards your dear parishioners, and obey the prescriptions of the holy Council of Trent.

One of the Deans, writing to me on this subject in the name of his Deanery, says:

"We hold the Catechism of Perseverance immediately after some public Office; after Vespers, if they are well attended, but if people do not come to the evening Office, we hold it after Mass, so to embrace, in one large net, all who are present."

The Catechism, held for grown-up people, was, as you know, the custom of the diocese of Meaux in the time of Bossuet. In Savoy, as I have said, it is a general custom. The Bishops of Besançon have done everything to establish the practice in their diocese, and it is still in existence. Three years ago, in a large village of the diocese, in a parish containing 1500 souls, I saw at Mass as many men as women; the children were in good places, and the Curé, who catechised from the pulpit, questioned not only the children, but the grown-up people. You will say, That is very well in the mountains. No, gentlemen, it is done also in the plains. At Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours, near Rouen, the Curé holds the Catechism after Vespers on Sunday, and questions the men and women, who answer quite simply. At S. Louis-d'Antin, in Paris, at the poor people's Catechism, men and women of fifty and sixty answer with the greatest pleasure.

But what am I saying, gentlemen? In this very diocese, the Catechism at Mass has been tried, and has succeeded; one Curé writes to me:

"Seeing with grief, Monseigneur, a number of my parishioners gradually forsaking the Church on Sunday, I have tried to bring them back by *substituting a regular Catechism for the prône, every fortnight.* To effect this, I arrange four or five of my Catechism children opposite the pulpit. I ask them questions, and ground my Instructions on their answers. I can assure your *Grandeur* that now many more people attend Mass."

The attendance at Mass would be yet more increased, if all the children who are to make their first Communion in the year, were there, in suitable places, so that the Curé could put questions to them on the Catechism and on the Gospel; and also the *Persévérants* of both sexes.

Another Curé, who has adopted the same practice, works it as follows:

"One Sunday I explain the Catechism, another Sunday the Catechism is not repeated, but I have the Gospel repeated, and then take the opportunity of explaining it. First, one child repeats the *entire* Gospel. Then several children repeat it, each taking a part of it. When one part has been recited, I explain it; the explanation finished, the second part is recited and then explained, and so on till I have gone through the whole Gospel."

This practice is excellent. It converts the *prône* into a Catechism open to every one in a parish.

Thus, gentlemen, you see how it is possible to found, to arrange and direct with success, a Catechism of Perseverance, either at Sunday Vespers, or even at High Mass.

And certainly, I do not see what is to prevent your succeeding in it, even in the smallest place.

EIGHTH DISCOURSE.

HOW TO MAKE THE CATECHISM OF PERSEVERANCE VERY INTERESTING.

The Catechism of Perseverance we suppose well set on foot, time and place well chosen, there remains yet one point, the most important of all, namely, to conduct the whole thing in a very interesting manner. Evidently, gentlemen, everything depends on this; success is only the reward of knowing how to interest; but then it is certain.

But how can the meetings of a Catechism of Perseverance be conducted with interest? I have already shown you many ways; I can still give you others.

In the first place, gentlemen, it is indispensable to have a *Rule:* a written Rule, to be formally read aloud and explained at the first meetings, before the whole parish. This Rule makes every one feel directly that the Catechism is a very serious thing; then your explanation of it will give you the opportunity of telling the children what the Catechism will be like, and what they will have to do to succeed in it; besides pointing out to them many useful habits which henceforth should form part of their daily life. Have a Rule, then, gentlemen, carefully made, very exact, very much in detail; and explain it clearly and properly at the opening of your Catechism.

What should be the order and succession of the various parts? You know already from what has gone before; but as I am not now ordering anything, and am only giving you, by way of example, your own experiences, I shall content

myself with quoting to you again a passage in a letter from one of yourselves :

"The Catechism is held every Sunday, at Vespers, at half-past one o'clock. The boys sit in the nave, on the Epistle side, the girls are on the other side. The Curé is in the centre, having a little table before him, covered with a cloth, and on this table he has his books, and his *claquoir*. The Curé, before and after the meeting, says the prayer from the Manual, which all who can read have in their hands. The heads of the forms note down the absences on a special sheet. One of the secretaries reads the *procès-verbal* of the last meeting, from a special register. The Curé reports on the Analyses. All those who can write have books for Analyses ; the boys' books are green, the girls' blue (about a dozen books in all). Seals of different colours are impressed on these books. Then Vespers. At two o'clock the Instruction. These four years have been devoted to the explanation of the Commandments of God and the Church. At half-past two, a hymn and a story. At a quarter to three, the repetition of the Gospel, then a hymn to the Holy Spirit, followed by the Homily, and practical resolutions for the week."

One important point, gentlemen, is to see that your children, and others who are present, do not have merely a *passive* part to play in your Catechism, you must learn how to give to all *an active part*, in singing the *hymns*, by *prayers*, by *questions ;* in short by everything which will bring them forward, and give them something to do ; for this will interest them.

I can only now sketch very rapidly the different ways of creating interest in a Catechism of Perseverance.

Hymns. Everywhere and always hymns will be popular, if you know how to set about it. At all costs, gentlemen, have hymns sung. With time, with patience, with perseverance, with the valuable help of the school-masters for the boys, and the mistresses or Sisters for the girls, you will teach, with much labour, perhaps, but eventually you will teach your little peasants, first a *refrain*, later on a whole hymn, then another hymn, then another: make all your singers take part in this hymn-singing, and you will end by having an excellent choir, and by having taught hymns to the whole parish, and very soon perhaps your hymns will get beyond the precincts of the Church, and you will hear them echoing in the fields.

And this is not only talk on my part ; for already, gentle-

men, there are a great many parishes where intelligent Curés have achieved this delightful result.

One Curé writes to me of a very good and simple practical way of teaching the children the hymns: "All my children, without exception, possess either a *Manual for the Great Epochs of Life*, or the *Little Manual for Parochial Retreats.*" Do as this good Curé does, gentlemen. If the *Manual for the Great Epochs*, which is far preferable, seems to you too dear, or too advanced for some of your children, at least you can always provide them with this *Little Manual*, which contains the most important hymns. It was for this very purpose that I had this *Little Manual* printed, a small book for a penny, within the reach of every one, even in the poorest parish.

Together with hymns, *Prayer.* Thus, it is an excellent plan to divide the different parts of a Catechism by the use of the *chapelet*, giving out aloud one special grace to ask for. This is done in some Catechisms, and I cannot applaud it too much. By this intention publicly announced, you direct souls to one special object, and thus you make them really pray, you do what is of such great importance in a Catechism, you teach real prayer.

There are some who, as we have seen, insert into their Catechism, and very profitably, *stories*, or *readings*, taken from the lives of some young saints, who may serve as models to the children. It is excellent. But this again demands that it be well chosen, well prepared, for nothing must be read which is not striking or interesting.

One of your great resources, gentlemen, for throwing a great interest, even into your Catechisms of Perseverance, is the *repetition of the Catechism*, and *questions* put to the children. Good answers skilfully brought out by questions which have been *well prepared*, and are therefore clear, simple, definite, and well-worded; and then approval given openly before the congregation. Do you suppose that fathers and mothers, even in the country, would be indifferent to their child's public success? No, every one in the parish even is interested.

On the other hand, in this Catechism, which is optional, you

must carefully avoid anything which would be painful to the children, or would humiliate them, for fear of making them take a dislike to it.

Some of you, with the object of giving yet more variety and interest to their Catechism, have devised the following plan: "The children are questioned on the *prône* of High Mass." It is an excellent idea, gentlemen, it brings people to Mass, it makes them listen to the Curé's words, it enables him to repeat the *prône* in a more simple and direct form, and to impress strongly the things he has said.

But for this purpose the *prône* itself must be instructive, clear, didactic; in short, capable of being easily understood, retained and analysed. It must not be a vague, diffuse, or pompous discourse.

Another Curé, who has the same custom, thus expresses himself:

"I question the children on the *prône* of the morning; which I explain again by illustrations or stories, to bring it more within their reach. By thus taking *for the Catechism of Perseverance the same subject as that at Mass*, I believe I have found a way by which persons who have not been able to come to Mass may yet profit by the *prône;* and by the questions I give, I make sure that the children have understood me."

As to the Instruction, let it be clear, precise, attractive, brightened by examples, by illustrations and lively remarks, well within their understanding; *communicative*, if I may so express myself. This is the way to make them listen to you with ardent interest, and to leave clear ideas and real knowledge in their minds.[1]

[1] And under this head, gentlemen, I cannot refrain from quoting to you what one of the Deans of this diocese has written to me. You will find in it a zeal, an understanding of men and things, and a devotion to the work of souls, with which you will be charmed.

"1. ROUSE UP YOUR AUDIENCE.

"And first, that method which consists in putting the Catechist and those who hear him in mutual and visible sympathy cannot be too strongly commended; this method profits both him who speaks, and those who hear.

"'REVERA,' says S. Augustine (*De Catech. Rud.*, c. xiii. n. 18), 'MULTUM EST *perdurare in loquendo usquè ad terminum præstitutum, cum moveri non*

Evidently, one of the best means you can employ for obtaining Analyses, is to make them easy *by a good method* of Instruction. One of you has this excellent plan :

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videamus audientem ; quod sivè non audeat, religionis timore constrictus, voce aut aliquo motu corporis significare approbationem suam, sivè humanâ verecundiâ reprimatur, sivè dicta non intelligat, sivè contemnat ; quandoquidem, nobis non cernentibus, animum ejus incertum est, omnia sermone tentanda sunt, quæ ad eum excitandum, et tanquam de latebris eruendum POSSENT VALERE.'

"And elsewhere he had said : 'FACIT ETIAM LOQUENTI TÆDIUM *auditor immobilis vel quia non movetur affectu, vel quia nullo motu corporis indicat se intelligere, vel sibi placere* QUÆ DICUNTUR' (*De Catech. Rud.*, x. n. 14).

"Formerly, Christian hearers did not hesitate to show their feelings openly, and if something of devotional stillness was lost, much eloquence was gained. Some hearts who were moved showed it in an audible burst of feeling, and this infected the rest of the audience ; things indeed went so far, that Augustine and Chrysostom had often to recall their enthusiastic audience to moderation and silence. When S. Ephrem preached on the Last Judgment, the animation of his hearers added to the effect of his words ; he questioned, he made them question him, and he answered ; it was a conversation between him and the congregation, and the interruptions which came from all sides gave him the opportunity of adding new features to the terrible picture he had already drawn of the judgments of God, and to make all feel those sentiments of piety and terror which had at first only been felt by a few.

"Such manifestations could not be shown during the sermon or the *prône*, but what objection would there be to stirring them up in some measure at a Catechism ? and what an advantage it would be !

"We would wish, then, for the Catechist to give all manner of liberty on this point, without at all losing his dignity, '*nec nominetur in vobis, aut stultiloquium aut scurrilitas,*' let him set himself to excite in his audience sometimes admiration, sometimes fear, sometimes joyfulness ; let him arouse them to show it openly, by his vigorous words, and by every method, direct or indirect, of excitement ; and when any feeling does burst forth, let him suffer it to take its course, and far from checking it, let him join in it, with a view to making it yet more general and sympathetic : '*timor nimius, impediens declarationem judicii ejus, blandâ exhortatione pellendus est*' (Aug. *De Catech.*, c. xiii., n. 18). This would be the triumph of his eloquence. There could be no doubt about the result of such a Catechism ; a spiritual and skilful man would soon attract to it the most idle minds ; and then the Catechism, far from being a wearisome thing, would be looked on as one of the most agreeable pastimes for young people.

"If, in spite of all this, the audience persists in its indifference, S. Augustine *recommends the following*, as a means of stirring them up.

"II. SPEAK TO THE IMAGINATION.

"'QUOD SI NIMIS TARDUS EST . . . *renovare oportet ejus animum dicendo aliquid honesta hilaritate conditum et* APTUM REI *quæ agitur, vel aliquid* VALDE *mirandum et stupendum, vel etiam dolendum et plangendum, et magis de ipso, ut propriâ curâ pectus evigilet : quod tamen non offendat ejus verecundiam asperitate aliquâ, sed potius familiaritate* CONCILIET' (Aug. *De Catech.*, c. xiii., n. 18).

"Every Instruction *is always gone through again in the form of questions.*"

This is admirable, gentlemen, and he gives his very good reasons:

"(1) To make the Analysis easier to those who can do it;

"(2) To be certain that I have been well understood." [1]

"I have dwelt on this point with real pleasure, and have supported it with weighty authorities, because I am convinced that it is one of the very best ways of doing good to ignorant country people; and because also it is easy to practise, and is certain to be efficacious. Were there but six grown-up people at this Catechism, well-instructed Christians would be gradually formed, and perhaps zealous and fervent ones. Leaving the Church, they will go and tell their neighbours what they have learnt; they will be models, and means of edification for the rest.

"I can hear some saying that this easiness and this success is all imagination: I will only say that it is all possible, and for this reason alone, that it has all been done, even in very small parishes; at any rate let it be tried; and if you do not succeed, you will at least have the merit of having tried; and this is something in men's eyes, and it is everything in the sight of God: '*curam exigeris, non curationem*' (S. Bernard, *De Consid.*)."

[1] "Example:

"The lesson is, the third of God's Commandments, which has been repeated.

"After the Invocation of the Holy Spirit, I begin my Instruction. When it is ended, I call up a child of average intellect, and put the following questions to him. In them is the whole substance of my Instruction:

"In what words is the third Commandment in the law of God expressed?

"Why is it said, *Remember?*

"What is the meaning of the word *Sabbath?*

"What is the meaning of the word *Sunday?*

"What is meant by *hallowing a day?*

"Why did the Apostles change the observance of the Lord's Day *from Saturday to Sunday?*

"Who had given them this power?

"What must we do to hallow Sunday?

"What do you understand by the *servile works* from which we should abstain on Sunday?

"If we worked without desiring to gain money, would it be sin?

"If it were simply as recreation?

"What would make it allowable to work on Sunday?

"In this case, would your Sunday work exempt you from going to Mass?

"Are you obliged, unless really hindered, to go to Mass, under pain of mortal sin?

"For what causes could you be allowed to be absent?

"What other works of piety should we do on Sunday?

"What are we to think of those who do no works of piety?

"And of those who devote themselves to forbidden pleasures?

"When I question the child who is standing up to answer, every child who makes an Analysis writes down the question. If the child who is answering hesitates, I give the answer myself, to prevent delay, and he repeats it.

If you can very seldom get Analyses, gentlemen, there is at least one stimulant which is everywhere quite in your power; *Conferences* and *Dialogues*.

Once again, gentlemen, to take my example from a class which is somewhat similar to what you have in the country, look at the schools of the Brothers, what interest those little scenes in dialogue—which the Brothers arrange for their pupils on certain high-days—excite both in the children and their parents who are present. Why should we not borrow these things for our Catechisms, which are schools too, the very school of religion? The common people, gentlemen, just because they have fewer opportunities of being proud of their children, are perhaps all the more alive to it on the rare occasions when they can enjoy it. This feeling is certainly quite natural and quite legitimate; we must take advantage of it; and most certainly these little moral *Dialogues*, where the lesson is impressed on the mind unconsciously by the very interest of the dialogue, or a little *Conference*, or a point of dogma or of morals, treated controversially, *either between the Curé and a child, or between two children who have been well prepared*, would shed the greatest charm over your Catechisms, would make them most acceptable to the parents, and would draw them there in crowds. And all this is perfectly practicable in a country Church; it is all possible, gentlemen, in every parish. The proof is that many of you do it, with great zeal, and with great success.[1]

"This exercise lasts ten minutes.

"At the following Catechism in the *jeu des bons points*, I ask the same questions. Thus every lesson is explained three times over. Generally, at the third time, even those who cannot read and who do not go to school, answer fairly well.

"The Analyses made are in the proportion of one in five."

[1] The following has also been written to me on this subject:

"Why should we not, in those Catechisms where all the parishioners attend, prepare all the children to treat on two religious questions in the form of a Conference? These questions would be written out, and then committed to memory. One child would, in a loud voice, in public, in the congregation of the faithful, put the question to his companion. He would reply, they would treat it according to the written scheme which they had learnt, and then the Curé would comment on these questions with interest."

There are some among you who like to compose these little dialogues and conferences themselves, and certainly it is a very fitting occupation for a Pastor, a very good employment for leisure hours in the presbytery. "I have also composed, and had represented with great success," writes a Curé, "the Mysteries of the Nativity of our Lord and the Adoration of the Magi." I have only one thing to say of it, gentlemen; it is both charming and edifying.

One very evident subject for these dialogues, which may be of immense benefit, and which has already been employed with great success in several parishes of this diocese, is *the Passion of our Lord.*

The Curé who was the first in the diocese who attempted to put the text of our Gospels into dialogue, and who has had it thus recited by the children of his Catechism, writes thus:

"What I did, Monseigneur, was simply a recital in dialogue of the Passion of our Lord. All my children took part in it, even the little ones, to the great pleasure of their parents. The great number of the people, or of the Chief Priests, or even of the Apostles, allowed of a great many being on the scene. Our Lord was only represented by one, we tried that he should be dignified, full of nobleness and feeling; the *rôle* of the holy women was full of emotion and piety. The whole was interspersed with hymns or lamentations, easy to sing, and interpreting the meaning of the principal scenes of this divine drama to the children. The most difficult part was dressing our little actors, who, however, were very ready. But, with a little trouble, it was all managed.

"The effect was excellent in our part of the country. For several years it was greatly enjoyed. Immense crowd, full Church, deep silence, many tears shed. They are asking me for it again."

I can imagine it, gentlemen; what might have a doubtful effect performed by grown-up people, is charming done by children.

This has been imitated in several parishes, and the Curés have all had most satisfactory results from it.

Finally, gentlemen, you have the general *Recapitulations*, and you have the *Examinations.*

To make the children *repeat*, every month perhaps, before all the parish, *at a formal gathering*, all the lessons of the month, of course to be followed by rewards, would evidently

tend very much to keep them on the alert, and to stir them up to real efforts; it would also interest the parents, or the elder brothers or sisters, to take a part in it themselves, if it were in their power; it would create a great movement towards the Catechism.

The *Examinations*, gentlemen, can be conducted with still more solemnity. I will only now say one thing about them; that a great deal more can be made of them in the country than in the towns. I have seen with pleasure the attempt three of you have made, with so much success, to give life to their Catechisms, and to attract the parents to it; and among the many plans which your zeal has invented, I am pleased to single out this one:

These three gentlemen conceived the idea of joining their three Catechisms from time to time for a solemn examination. And this is the means they adopted for executing their scheme. They arranged a programme, containing precise, short, but very clear explanations. This programme was put into the hands of every school-master. Each of these, during the interval from one examination to another, about six weeks, taught his scholars not only the letter of the Catechism, but the explanatory answers which had been given him; so that the children, who had already had them in their own parish, and repeated them every week at school, finished by knowing them *ad unguem*.

Then the examination was held. I will quote you the words of the report sent me by the Archdeacon, whom these gentlemen had invited to preside:

"In the morning, at the *prône* of the parochial Mass, the solemn examination was announced, and families were warmly exhorted to come themselves and witness the success of their children.

"The parishes of M—— and of S—— arrived at two o'clock. Compline was omitted. After Vespers the examination began. The children were in the large nave; the girls to the right, the boys to the left, in charge of the masters and mistresses, who kept order and silence. The three *members of Council* were together, the singers were in the choir, the fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, filled the rest of the Church. A little in front of the pulpit was a table with two urns. One contained the names of the boys, the other the names of the girls. The children came forward,

three at a time, sometimes boys, sometimes girls, to answer the examiners. Each of the Curés took his turn in examining. There was a rock here to be avoided. If the children did not answer, the humiliation might discourage them, and make their parents less friendly. This danger had been wisely foreseen, and guarded against. At certain distances, within reach of the examiners, were young boys and young girls who knew what they were about perfectly. If the children who were questioned hesitated in the least, these stood up and gave the answer. In the evening, at the *Archiconfrérie*, there was again a numerous attendance. Five young girls held a dialogue composed by the Curé of ——, upon a point of morals. The parents listened more willingly to these pleasant preachers than they would have listened to a sermon."

All this, gentlemen, shews great zeal, and also great understanding of the means by which both parents and children may be influenced.

Still, gentlemen, excellent as is this way of exciting emulation, the Archdeacon very wisely makes this general observation, which I may usefully repeat to you:

"It would be a mistake, in my opinion, to try to examine every single child. This continual question and answer would end in becoming monotonous, and thus you would lose the time which might be so usefully employed in giving, in the parents' hearing, instructions, interesting stories, and good advice."

You see, gentlemen, that the Catechism, understood and practised after this fashion, is evidently a very serious work, though perfectly practicable, and it is one which ought to occupy an important part in the life of a Priest. Looking at all these schemes, all these methods of emulation, all this attention, this perseverance, the foresight, the labour, which a Catechism of Perseverance demands, even in a country place, from the Priests, I can hardly understand those who say they are weary, for want of occupation. No, no one is weary, no one lacks occupation, unless he is wanting in zeal. And even independently of the Catechisms, the ministry of souls, the seeking out, the care of souls, *taken in detail;* sick people, infirm, old, ignorant people, children, &c.—would they not be enough, even in the smallest parish, to occupy a Priest's whole time? It is only the ministry which may be called *official* which leaves time; the true ministry, the apostolic ministry, such as our Lord desires, leaves no time.

But, supposing, gentlemen, there are Priests in whose life the Catechism is nothing but a certain number of wearisome hours in the week, who, before the children come, never give it a serious preparation, nor even a thought, and who perhaps have never devoted a quarter of an hour to seeking out and trying different plans, or making attempts? And then, what can you look for? "*Ex nihilo, nihil.*" It is a very evident axiom, and only too applicable in this case. "*Nil sine magno vita labore dedit mortalibus,*" says even a heathen poet. You must make efforts, gentlemen, you must work, give yourself trouble, I grant; but only on these terms can you succeed in anything. And in this case, within certain limits at least, you cannot fail to succeed. Often even your success will surpass your hopes. By all that has been done up till now, we are able to see what may yet be done, if only your heart is greatly filled with zeal for this blessed work of Catechisms of Perseverance, and perhaps the time is not far off when these nurseries of Christian life, these sources of religious revival, will have been established in every parish of the diocese.

And only see, gentlemen, what good, what incalculable good, a good Catechism of Perseverance may do in a parish, particularly in looking forward to the future. Look at the comfort those have already received who have tried, look at the fruits they have already gathered. One of them writes:

"On the feast of Christmas, Monseigneur, I had the happiness of giving the Holy Communion to more than sixty people, among whom were three married men; this is an evident fruit of my Catechism. The grown-up girls who come to it are now happily in the habit of making their Confession every month. Allow me, in conclusion, to lay at your feet the respectful and filial homage of this dear Catechism. Yesterday, I made the *intendante* read aloud the letter you have done me the honour to write, then every one knelt down, and using their *chapelet*, prayed for blessings of the New Year for you."

I have quoted these last words, gentlemen, because they let us have a glimpse of a charming scene at the Catechism.

No, gentlemen, do not despair of yourselves as regards this ministry, which is so abundant in fruit, and so full of comfort even while you labour; it will take time, perhaps, and you

will have to bear fatigue certainly, but the blessing of God will crown your efforts.

He who has true zeal tries one means after another, one scheme after another, and if success does not come at once, he waits, he is not disturbed, and yet he does not cease to try again, to be always trying; the grace of God comes at last, and then the good Priest has his consolation. This is what happens everywhere when this work is done with zeal, when every one gives their help, when both girls and boys are cared for, and even more zeal spent on the boys than on the girls.

But now, gentlemen, to make an end of this great question of Perseverance Catechisms, I ask you, and I ask you all—practically, in view of all these inventions of zeal and means of emulation which we have in our hands, who can still doubt of the success of a Catechism of Perseverance; conducted with the intelligence and perseverance which zealous Priests put into it? or at least, who does not feel stirred up to make for once a good trial of his possibilities, and his resources, and to try what an apostolic spirit in the heart of a good Priest can do?

But this question of the possibility of Catechisms of Perseverance seems to some of you to be so far decided, that they have formally asked me to put forth orders for them.

"Catechisms of Perseverance," writes one of you, and I will quote you nearly all he writes, "could be *immediately* made *obligatory:*

"1. In the chief places of the deanery.

"2. In the *larger market-towns*, where at least six hundred souls may be living together within the diameter of a *kilomêtre.*

"3. And *optional*—while waiting for better things—in parishes of *less importance*, where the population *is not collected together*, but scattered in different hamlets, further off than a *kilomêtre.*

"In the parishes where they would at once be obligatory, they should take place at the same time as Vespers.

"All the children who are in the Catechism preparatory to first Communion should attend; and they themselves could be questioned on the letter of the Catechism.

"In parishes where the Catechism of Perseverance would be optional, the Curés could be induced, by way of trial, to substitute the Catechism for the *prône*, to give it from the pulpit, and to address it as much to the grown-up people as to the children. Time would show if this method

were good, or if there were objections to it. The attention of the parents could be roused by making the children recite little dialogues on the mystery of the day, or on different points of dogma or morals.

"The festivals of the Catechism would be celebrated at High Mass, and they would end by a solemn *Salut*.

"They could be suspended during the times of harvest and vintage, and held throughout all the rest of the year."

Another Curé writes to the same purpose :

"There should be a pastoral letter, solemnly instituting Catechisms of Perseverance throughout the diocese, to be held either at Vespers, or at High Mass ; all the children who are to make their first Communion in the course of the year should be admitted, and others up to their Confirmation, and beyond ; there should be hymns, questions, dialogues, conferences, prizes, pictures, &c."

This has been written to me, gentlemen, this has been asked of me. But for the present, I confine myself to appealing to your zeal, and I wait with full and entire confidence for the realization of our hopes. I am sure that we can attain the desired results without orders, and this result will then be gained solely by your own good-will and your love for souls.

BOOK VI.—TWO EXPERIENCES.

TWO EXPERIENCES.

I HAVE finished, gentlemen; on the Ministry of Catechising, I have told you all that I could find in my own soul, and in my recollections, as well as in your own examples. And I will not hide from you that this work, though attended with labour and fatigue, has nevertheless had a great charm for me; I will even say that I have done it with joy, and that my soul, wearied with struggles against impiety, and sorrowfully pre-occupied by the grievous events of the present and by the dangers of the future, has in this work felt a real repose. Happy at least, if now, with advancing years and strength failing, though work is not lessened, if before I leave the world, I could leave something to those who will succeed us, and above all to the young generation of Priests for whom specially I have written, something which should throw some real light and encouragement on this blessed work of Catechisms, a work which is so humble and yet at the same time so grand, so sweet and so laborious, so obscure and yet so fruitful.

Still, before laying down my pen, and as it were to follow up, in a living example, all the teaching I have sought to offer you, I am delighted, gentlemen, to be able to place before you two simple letters, written a long time ago by a man who had himself reaped the great blessings of the Catechism, and who, later on, having become a Priest, and desiring to give to others what he had himself received, devoted long years of his life to this ministry.[1]

[1] Readers of the *Life of Monseigneur Dupanloup* will recognize that they are his own "Experiences" which he gives here.—TRANSLATOR.

These two letters, gentlemen, will perhaps make you feel and know the work which I have been trying to bring before you, better than anything I have yet said, and will thus confirm all your impressions about it; for everything in these letters is simple and true, everything has been experienced and practised, and may therefore be depended on.

FIRST LETTER.

A FIRST COMMUNION AT S. SULPICE.

Dear Friend,

You wish, then, that I should tell you in detail the reasons which make me so ardently desire that you should devote yourself, with all the zeal in your power, to the work of Catechisms, in the parish where divine Providence has placed you. I will not refuse, for I must own I have this work greatly at heart.

Thinking it over in the presence of God, it seems to me that the best way to make you fully understand why I so press this upon you, is to tell you what Catechisms were at one time, to myself, at S. Sulpice; both at the time when I first came to it, as a child, to prepare for my first Communion (I was then twelve years old), and a little later (I was then barely twenty-one), when I returned there, as Catechist, fulfilling, in my turn, towards other children, the sweet and holy ministry from which I had myself received blessings a few years before.

In this narrative you will see what this ministry is; whence it comes, and whither it tends, in the Church of Jesus Christ; to what needs of souls it answers; what is its nature; what the essential conditions of its success; how much the heart has to do with it; and, in short, what influence the mysterious and celebrated words of our Lord should have on it, *Amas Me? Pasce agnos Meos*: "Lovest thou Me? Feed My lambs." On all these things, nothing has taught me so much as what I have myself experienced, both as child and as Catechist.

What I am about to tell you, then, is the narrative of my own experiences, what I have seen, proved, and felt.

Certainly, at those two great epochs of my life, I did not always define what I felt; but I have looked back upon it since, and it has been my surest and clearest guide, and I hope it will be for you also.

And if you wish that I should tell you first of all, what you will find to be the grand and final conclusion of my story, it is this—that to do this work well, you must, above all things, love the children. No doubt the Catechism is a work of Instruction, of faith and of understanding, but it is, above all, in its most important as in its most humble departments, a work of charity and love. Whoever does not love the children, let him leave it alone; he is not made for this work.

And it is not enough to love them with common charity, they must be loved with that tender and generous, that enlightened and ardent love, which, as S. Paul says, "Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things," which devotes itself to all, and never rests till it has saved those whom it loves, at least has spent itself entirely, has given all its strength to it. "*Impendam et superimpendar ipse.*"

Why all this? what is the necessity for such a love? Because, in such a work, you meet with so much labour, with such serious difficulties, with such numerous and fatiguing details; you have also to learn such deep secrets, to practise such delicate art to win these young souls, that divine Love alone can inspire you: "*Amas Me? Pasce agnos Meos.*"

I say again, my friend, if any one has not this love in his heart, he may go; he will not love the children, he will not be loved by them, and he will not do God's work. For myself, I am bound to confess to you, that if this work of the love of Jesus Christ has been fulfilled in my own soul, it is because by the providence of God I met at S. Sulpice with Catechists who loved us and whom we loved, Catechists to whom the Good Shepherd had said, "*Pasce agnos Meos*"; and who, in answer to the great question "*Amas Me?*" had replied, "*Domine, Tu omnia nosti, Tu scis quia amo Te;*"—and our Lord had said to them, "Then feed My lambs."

I tell you of all this, my dear friend, in all simplicity, and out of the fulness of my heart; for these recollections have a great charm for me, and I go back to them willingly, because I recall in them all the dearest emotions of my childhood, and also a lively sense of the gratitude I owe to God for all the blessings He then bestowed on my soul. Nothing has left its mark so strongly upon me, nothing has had so much influence on my life.

But in order to follow the order of time and the little events I am going to tell you of, I must go back to a little while before my first Communion.

I.

My early childhood was very idle; I was of a lively nature, ardent for pleasure, and impetuous in all games; still I did not shrink from work, I had even a certain satisfaction of mind in studying; but diversions, running races, parties for *balle* or for *barres*, were my supreme delight. I remember yet the transport, the overflowing joy and life that I felt in them; it was really an intoxication, I forgot everything else; and though I am not now making my confession to you, I ought to add that such a passion for amusement, and sad to say, still more the companionship of some children who are to be met with in Paris, are enough to do great harm to a soul. I was nearly twelve years old, and my friends scarcely ventured to speak to me of my first Communion.

I had indeed sometimes attended a little Catechism which was held for young children at S. Etienne-du-Mont, but I had taken no pleasure in it. This Catechism was held by a good old Priest whom we could hardly hear; he served as deacon in the parochial office. We were assembled, not in a Catechism Chapel, but in the Church itself, in the midst of the coming and going of the people. The Swiss, the beadles, those who let out chairs, moved about all round us, absolutely as if we were not there. Moreover, it was in winter, and it was icily cold in this great Church, where we felt almost all alone, lost in the multitude of passers-by. In short, there was nothing

there, either to create reverence, or to interest us, or to win our hearts to God.

From this poor Catechism I was sent one day to make my Confession. I cannot remember now who my Confessor was, no doubt a very good Priest, but he seemed to be about eighty, he listened quite coldly to my Confession without asking me anything, or saying anything either kind or severe; and giving me a penance, he let me go. In short, neither Catechists nor Confessors at S. Etienne-du-Mont pleased me much; I saw nothing in them which made me love them, neither, on my side, did I inspire them with any affection for me, and for this or some other reason they really did me more harm than good, for they showed me religion under a form which rather repelled than attracted me. I quickly left them all, as soon as it was possible. Things, certainly, are very different there now; but then, it must be owned, it was deplorable, and I really cannot imagine anything less likely to attract children and make them love God, and therefore I went no more. I was then between ten and eleven, and this first trial of the Catechism having succeeded so ill, I was not urged to try another. A journey which I made at this time, together with the unfitness of my mind, helped still further to delay my first Communion.

But two most happy circumstances, ordered for me by divine Providence, prepared at last a better future for me.

When nearly in my twelfth year, I was thrown into great intimacy with several children, most of them rather older than myself, and one even, whom we thought the most of, was fifteen. These boys were fairly intellectual, but scarcely any of them had any religion. With one exception, whom I shall soon speak of, their parents were in much the same condition. I have quite forgotten how it was that I was so intimate with them, but I remember quite well that we were very often together. It was not, as you see, a very good intimacy, and for a time it made me worse than ever. Still, it was the way by which the good God was seeking me to save me, and this is how it came about. One Sunday, the 12th of June, 1814, he first Sunday of the *Fête Dieu*, we were all together at the

house of one of my companions, who lived near the Church of S. Sulpice. All at once our games were interrupted by the singing of hymns and chants in the streets; it was the procession passing under our windows; the Holy Sacrament was being brought out of the Church for the first time for many years. It was at last allowed that the Good Shepherd should show Himself to His people, should go Himself to seek the wandering sheep, and it is sweet to me to think and to tell that perhaps I myself was found again on that day.

This thought has always been dear to my heart; but however that might have been, we all went to look. There were a great number of clergy, the whole of the Grand-Séminaire was there; those who carried flowers, and those who bore the thurifers, in white albs with beautiful blue girdles, forming the angelic band. The concourse of people was immense, it was a most charming and majestic sight. I must do my poor friends the justice to say, that except for one ridiculous joke, they were all quite respectful. For myself, it was all something more—this procession reminded me of those I had seen in my own country, when I was quite a little child. I had even taken part in them—you perhaps are aware of this custom—in the character of S. John the Baptist. I cannot describe what I felt at this recollection. I was also very much struck at seeing the great number of children belonging to the Catechisms of S. Sulpice, who walked in two long files at the head of the procession, in holiday clothes, with their banners. But, unfortunately, all this left a very transient impression. The procession passed on, and with it any serious awakening of Christian feeling in my heart. We went back to our interrupted amusements, and games still held my mind in a state of dissipation, far away from God.

Still, an impression was left in my mind by this religious spectacle. The contrast between these good children and our sad way of life sometimes came into my mind, and I began to feel grieved at living in the world with scarcely any religion.

Happily, I had at the same time another intimacy which

was to prove more profitable to me than that of which I have been speaking.

At this same time, there lived, in the quarter of S. Sulpice, a good and really Christian family. The girls went to the Catechism of Perseverance; the eldest son, aged fourteen, went to the Catechism for boys in the lower Chapel. I remember that during the summer, my worldly friends, our parents and this good family, made all together some excursions into the country. I thought them very pleasant, and certainly much better in every respect than the games for which we met in the town. I remarked with astonishment and a certain satisfaction how much better the contact with this religious family made us, when we were together—the Catechisms of S. Sulpice had given these young girls and their brothers a certain modesty and propriety, which, whether we would or not, inspired us with respect. With these good children virtue and its lovableness began to dawn on the horizon of my soul.

At last the word, first Communion, was spoken, and I did not throw it off. It is a sweet word, it does not terrify, even unconsciously it touches a child. It has a secret charm, which a child does not define to himself, but which attracts him, even purifies him, beforehand, and lifts up his soul into a higher, a serene region. . . . "I am going to make my first Communion. . . . I am preparing for my first Communion. . . ." A child hardly says these words without a certain respect for himself, a sort of religious fear, and a thought of his conscience. If he is good, he says them with a simple joy which is quite evident, and charming to see; but if, on the contrary, he has much to reproach himself with, if his irreligion, his obstinacy, his pride, his idleness, or other passions make him know how unworthy he is, he always says them, with a certain pleasure, no doubt, but still with embarrassment and reserve. How often I have seen this! Having for a moment raised his eyes with pleasure to those who are congratulating him, he immediately looks down again, knowing he is not worthy.

For myself, this word, first Communion, took hold of me

at once, very seriously. I felt that it was absolutely necessary that I should become better; that games and pleasure must no longer be everything to me. This great idea entirely filled my soul, and never left me. I had some regret, and some sadness, in thinking what I must amend or give up; but I refused nothing that was asked of me, and if I did not volunteer much, I willingly let myself be guided. I was introduced first to the Catechism of S. Séverin, which was our parish, but there they refused me. I love to think it was the will of God that I should be at S. Sulpice. At S. Séverin they thought me too young, though I was twelve years and a half, but they told my parents to bring me there again when I was eighteen! I learnt afterwards that the Priests of S. Séverin were ancient Jansenists. At the time I was surprised at their refusal, but not much disappointed. In the vague and confused state of mind in which I then was, I should not have been very sorry if this great affair of my first Communion had been delayed yet a little longer, if it were not by my own fault.

At last I was guided to S. Sulpice. The religious family of whom I have spoken decided the question. I went there with the eldest son. He was an *ancien* of the Catechism, he encouraged me, he told me that I should be well received, that they were not old clergy, as at S. Etienne-du-Mont, but young Priests. I think I can hear him say, speaking like a Christian scholar, and like a true and good child of the Catechism—

"Oh, these gentlemen are very good! I made my first Communion last year, but I have come back again this year; and then, you see, they are not old Priests, they are still at the seminary, some of them even are not Priests yet, but will be soon. Come to it, I am sure you will be pleased; besides, you will see if you like it. You can be outside for the first time, and then you can watch it all."

He persuaded me, and I went, and I remember—and as I write these lines I feel again the grave, solemn, overpowering emotion which I inwardly experienced as I crossed the threshold—going down the steps to this lower Chapel.

Had my soul a presentiment of all that would happen to it there? I know not, but I felt instinctively that a new life was about to begin, and a sort of quick, involuntary trembling came over me, in which fear was stronger than hope. I remember they were singing the hymn, "*Venez, divin Messie, sauvez nos jours infortunés, venez, venez, venez.*" It was the first Sunday in Advent, and I was touched by it. M. Dumarsais, whom I knew so well afterwards, gave the Homily, on the Last Judgment. I remember still the very tone of his voice. He stopped short once, which surprised me much. My friend told me afterwards that nevertheless he preached very well, which was true.

This first time I stayed outside the enclosure, at the left of the altar, leaning on a balustrade which served as a barrier; my arms crossed, and very attentive to all that was going on. I can see myself still in this place and in this attitude. From the first moment I was fascinated. I had been in many Churches, in large and magnificent Churches crowded with the faithful, I had seen in them pompous ceremonies; but nowhere had I felt the impression which this Chapel made upon me. I saw no one but children there, nearly three hundred, but all so thoughtful, so attentive; there seemed to be an atmosphere of silence, of religion, of thoughtfulness, of docility, and sincerity which touched me. All the looks, all the hearts of the children seemed hanging on the words of their Catechists. It is true that in these there was a certain affectionate dignity, a firmness and benevolence, which made you feel a something more than human authority. Everything about them seemed sweet, pure and almost heavenly. I tried at once to attract their attention by my own behaviour. All my thoughts were instantly directed to this.

This is indeed the first instinct of a child, when he has the happiness of meeting with noble and benevolent souls; it is a deep-seated and excellent instinct, it is the true respect for himself and for them, it is the good and right desire to make himself loved by those he admires; but in order to this, the child must feel that he is in a place where he can hope to be esteemed and loved, if he deserves to be; that he is in a place where

souls are regarded closely and lovingly; where good behaviour, virtue, and docility are held in honour; where they are taught, where they are learnt, where they are practised; where those are loved and esteemed who are not yet good, but who wish to become so, who have a good will for it and have already made some happy beginnings. In short, a child must feel that his Catechism is a school of wisdom and virtue, presided over by kindness, affection, devotion, the love of God and the love of souls; where, under the auspices of a religious and fatherly discipline, he finds the support of good examples, the sweetnesses of friendship, the inspirations of gratitude, and the excitement and generosity of Christian emulation.

I had felt nothing of all this at S. Etienne-du-Mont, I felt it all in this underground Chapel. Every good feeling for purity, for docility, for honourable praise, for propriety, for openness and candour, was at once awakened in my soul. It was a strange impression, and I can only explain it by saying: I met God Himself there, and His goodness was infinite!

Thus it was in the very midst of my violent and absorbing dissipations, when my ardent nature was at its height, that, as it were, from the edge of an abyss God came to take me, to bring me here, to bring me to life again, to touch my soul again, to purify, to adopt me.

All these impressions of His grace were infinitely and indescribably sweet and strong. I went on, not knowing where. Everything touched me. I was twelve years old, at that age consecrated by the words of the Gospel: "*Factus annorum duodecim.*" Every time I went into the Chapel I was fascinated by the goodness and attention of these children. At once I also was steady, teachable, zealous. A desire to emulate good was born in me. Those who were not so good as the rest displeased me.

Thenceforth I began to love my Catechists; their gravity, their gentleness, their kindness attracted me to them. I had a great desire to win their favour and their regard. It seemed to me that not to be attentive at the Catechism in this Chapel, and with such good Catechists, was an insult and an injustice. I did not say this to myself in so many words, but I felt it.

Children who were playing in the *Place S. Sulpice* sometimes came shouting rudely opposite the skylight in the underground Chapel which looked towards the *Rue Garancière*. And when they said, "Those are naughty children," we thought so at once, we felt it; and far from doing us any harm, it gave us a horror of evil, and drew us all the more to our Catechists, whom we knew to be so good, and who we saw were pained by it.

That first day, at the end of the meeting, I had my name put down. My friend brought me to M. Lacombe, who was the Head Catechist; he asked me my baptismal name, and that pleased me. In my school, which was attached to a large college, this friendly habit of calling a child by his baptismal name as well as his surname was a thing quite unknown. I told him my age, and where I lived; he wrote it all down, and then said, "As you desire to prepare for your first Communion, my child, you must now be very steady; but I am sure we shall be much pleased with you." I remember still the impression these simple words made on me, and how they went to my heart.

I went away, if not converted, at least very much impressed, very serious, and charmed with the kind reception I had met with, and really very happy to have made this first step of return to a better life.

The following Sunday I took my place with the other children. I was placed among the front benches. Everything at the Catechism pleased me. The order and variety of the exercises, the Instructions, the Homilies, the *jeu des bons points*, the Admonitions of the Head Catechist, the hymns—it was altogether extremely interesting. It lasted two hours, two hours and a quarter, and I still remember my surprise at finding how quickly such a long time had passed. From every meeting of the Catechism I carried away most happy impressions; my faults certainly were not yet corrected, far from it; but I had turned towards good; the fight against evil had begun; and if I let myself be drawn into it, my conscience spoke at once, and self-reproach followed. The recollection of the Catechism hardly ever left me; I even began to pray to

God as I should; that is to say, to make real prayers, from my heart, and I never left the Chapel without being the better for it.

Nevertheless, quite at first I met with a stumbling-block in my way, and which in my state of mind was very trying: it was really a strange thing! I had great difficulty in finding a Confessor. The Catechists had sent me to a grand M. Dehansy, who looked very kind, and was so really, as I afterwards knew, but he was not kind enough to me that day; he refused me, saying that he should not have time to hear me, that too many children had already been sent to him for Confession, and that I must go to some one else. It surprised me very much and was a real grief to me. I could not understand how a Priest could refuse a child who came to give him his confidence and confess his faults.

Happily in the sacristy of S. Sulpice there was at the same time a M. de Keravenant, who, seeing my trouble, called me to him, looked at me very closely and very kindly, and said, "Well, my child, I will receive you; M. Dehansy is too much occupied; come to-morrow to my Confessional." I was quite punctual at the appointed hour; it was in the Chapel of S. John the Baptist. How that Chapel remains in my memory! When I saw M. de Keravenant come into the Confessional in his surplice, my heart beat very fast. I knelt down in my place, and made him my first Confession. I had written it in cipher; he encouraged me very much, helped me by his questions to make a good Confession, and I went away very happy. I remember still the pleasure and eagerness with which I went to the Luxembourg that same day, to join a party for *barres*. Never had I felt so light, never had my companions seen me run so confidently, not for a moment guessing what had made me so much better a runner that day than usual.

With the Catechism, then, everything in my life began to improve. I ought however to say, that at the beginning I still sometimes was tempted to absent myself, and, divided between the pleasure of a game of *barres* and the happiness of the Catechism, I gave way once for the Luxembourg. But this

temptation did not last long; my delight in the Catechism very soon conquered the passion for play.

Two things greatly contributed to this; the *Hymns* and the *Diligences*, that is to say, the two things—will you take note of this, my friend—the two things which we did ourselves, where we were not only passive, but in which we took an active part.

We were delighted with the hymns, we sung them with all our heart, and gradually, by the sweetness or the energy of the singing, the thoughts and the maxims, and the most noble sentiments of the faith, were grafted in our souls. To say the truth, it was the life of the Catechism. Without the hymns, in spite of the zeal and the skill of our Catechists, it would all have been very cold. When, at the signal given by M. Lacombe, we all began to sing, it was like a revival of zeal and energy throughout the Catechism. After a very serious Instruction, which had kept us closely attentive for half an hour, and bent down, pencil in hand, over our note-books, we sometimes felt wearied and our thoughts began to wander; but all at once some beautiful hymn was given out, which cheered us up and at the same time made us attentive again, which often touched us, and always interested and rested us. Certainly, for me, it was the hymns more than anything which converted me and bound me for ever to religion.

The *Diligences* also did a great deal. They inspired me with piety, and persuaded me to truth and virtue. I remember still the *Diligences* which I made on the commandments of God; I can never forget to what a degree they opened my mind and my heart to the holiness of Christian morality; what I wrote thus myself, in my *Diligence*, at home, certainly had a greater effect on me than even what I had heard at the Catechism. And that is natural; instead of simply listening to things, I said them to myself, and as well and as strongly as I could. Moreover, the Instruction had only lasted half an hour; whereas, it took me three or four hours to compile it, and thus for three or four hours I was instructing and exhorting myself.

I was very young, and I had very few books, but they were

very good ones; I read them over and over again continually, and I used them to help me in my Analyses. I took special pains to make and compose well the prayers and the resolution which, as was the custom of the Catechism, I added at the end of each *Diligence*. There could be no better way of planting good feelings and good resolutions in our souls. Among others I remember a prayer to S. Joseph which I once composed, and with which the Catechists were so pleased that they read it aloud at the Catechism. They did not mention my name, but I recognized myself, and was very happy that I had done so well; and their kind words on this occasion encouraged me much.

The Catechist who had given the Instruction corrected the *Diligences* very carefully, and classed them according to their merit; and the Head Catechist gave a formal report of them on the following Sunday; and every Sunday—that was a very important time for me and for us all.

There were sometimes a hundred to one hundred and fifty Analyses, and how delightful it was to hear one's name among the first! What a glory to obtain some honourable mark, and specially the highest of all! But it was so difficult to gain, that very few dared to think of it.

They gave sacred prints, and good marks to those who had distinguished themselves by their care in making their *Diligences*, and also to those who had repeated the Gospel or the Catechism well, and above all to those who had been particularly well-behaved. And all this was done by these gentlemen in so affectionate, so good, so dignified a manner, that our hearts were charmed with it. They read aloud, each time, the names of those who had obtained the different rewards, never forgetting our baptismal name; and thus we felt ourselves elevated, honoured by religion and its ministers; nowhere else in the world did our childhood receive such consideration; above all we felt that we were loved by these gentlemen, and we loved them. For myself, I must own that the impression I received from them was most strong and irresistible; and it must be said that their ministry towards us was so perfectly disinterested, their attentions so careful, their affection so

tender and so devoted, that resistance to such charity was hardly possible.

They were, too, so indulgent to me, I had moreover such a desire to do well, to win their affection and to respond to it, and such a zeal for winning the rewards of the Catechism, that I remember, before the end of the year, I had received seventy-five pictures from them. I collected them, I kept them with the most religious care. Among us all there was a quiet emulation as to who should have the most, and this emulation was mingled with lively gratitude; we felt that we possessed them more through the kindness of these gentlemen than from our own merit. All went together, and left a sweet and tender feeling in our hearts.

Next to the *grand cachet*, which really made us beside ourselves with joy, the marks for good behaviour, announced at the close of the Catechism, gave the greatest pleasure. How we waited for that last minute! What happiness to hear one's own name! As to the *grand cachet*, called also No. 5, the first time I had it I was quite stupefied and bewildered with surprise and with reverence. I could not believe that I, myself, could have deserved it; I attributed it to the religion which had so lifted me up, to the Instruction I had heard, to the Catechist who had given it.

Among our Catechists two above the rest won all my affection—one by his austere goodness, the other by his great kindness.

M. Lacombe, the Head Catechist, had a very ascetic look, and I knew afterwards that he was a saint; he impressed us very much, but we loved him as much as we respected him. M. Menjaud, afterwards Bishop of Nancy and now Archbishop of Bourges, was extremely lovable. I ought to say that he had a great love for me, and I returned it well. He took me aside one day in this Chapel where I sometimes liked to stay, after the Catechism was over, and kept me some minutes to speak of my *Diligence* on the Fifth Commandment, on murder; he had given the Instruction and was much pleased by my Analysis, and he had kept me back to tell me so, and to give me a little image of the Blessed Virgin. How one loves a

Catechist who keeps you back after the rest, to say a word of encouragement; how happy it makes you! This sign of friendship wins your heart. It needs no more to win a child. At that age, the heart opens and gives itself up so easily! And this natural disposition, this freshness of feeling becomes a precious resource for a good Catechist, who can easily turn it to spiritual advantage.

The fact is—and this, my friend, is what you must above all understand—the fact is, that in a Catechism, if once you are inspired with affection, everything is gained. When once I loved the Catechism and the Catechists, I sacrificed everything to it. It would have been a grief to me to be absent. My heart was there, it was my treasure; and the six days of the week, which came between one Sunday and another, never passed quickly enough.

And yet this was only as yet the Sunday Catechism. The week-day Catechism and that of Perseverance were yet to come. But they soon came, and by the grace of God finished what had been so happily begun. For I ought to say that the Sunday Catechism, in spite of these good beginnings and the favourable impressions I received from it, had not yet produced in me one of those decided emotions which stir the conscience deeply, and change once for all the heart and life.

I remember only one impression of this kind which I received at the Sunday Catechism.

It was M. Teysseire, a man who was to have a great influence over me and my future, particularly after his death, and I am going to tell you how he gave my heart the strongest blow it had yet received. He had been a brilliant pupil, and then a master, in the Polytechnic School. On leaving the School, he was entered at the Great Seminary of S. Sulpice, was made Priest and Sulpician. He was an angelic Priest. He was charged with the general direction of the Catechisms of S. Sulpice, and came once a year to visit each Catechism. On Septuagesima Sunday he came to visit ours. He was then twenty-seven. As soon as he came into the midst of us, I was impressed with his countenance and the fire of his looks; he spoke to us with a grand and simple eloquence. His words

were like a living but gentle flame; I was fascinated by them. There was one moment especially, when, speaking of the ingratitude of men towards God, he uttered a heartfelt cry which echoes yet in the depths of my recollection. None of my Catechists had hitherto so moved me.

II.

After these good beginnings followed then the week-day Catechism. That for Easter first, but I did not belong to it. I had come too late to the Sunday Catechism, and was put off to the Catechism and first Communion of Whitsuntide. The Easter Catechism, however, was very useful to me, for this reason, that it seemed to bring the time for my own first Communion nearer, and made me think of it oftener; they often spoke to us on Sunday about this Catechism; and we took the greatest interest in all we heard of it.[1] The children who had had the happiness of being admitted to it were with us in the underground Chapel. I looked at them with the greatest interest, with a sort of religious envy. It so happened that one child, who was near me on Sunday, and who was often to be noted for his good answers, had been nominated *Intendant* of the week-day Easter Catechism; he was called Alexandre Journaux. Another, called Paulin Coincy, was later nominated *Intendant* of the Whitsuntide Catechism. These nominations to the highest dignities of the Catechism seemed so great in my eyes, the children who received them were thought so much of by us, that—nearly fifty years have passed since then—I have never again seen Paulin Coincy or Alexandre Journaux, and yet I still remember them, their look, their words, the tone of their voice, as if it were yesterday.

Lest I should be too much disappointed at not being admitted to the Easter first Communion, my Catechists were good enough to tell me of it before the list was announced, and to tell me the simple reason for it; but when the time came for

[1] M. Giraud who has lately died, Cardinal and Archbishop of Cambrai, was the head of this Catechism.

the week-day Catechism of Whitsuntide, and I heard my name, one of the first on the list of children to be admitted, my joy, though very serious, was very great; and with a security which was full of sweetness I could now rest on this thought: *I am going, then, to make my first Communion!*

We all even felt a sort of pride in it; which made us feel beforehand the necessity of becoming good and well-behaved. No doubt, as I have said, there is a charm in the word first Communion; it is pleasing to children and to every age; but it is also very serious, and very efficacious in obliging a child to look into himself, and making him both rational and thoughtful. The power of this word is so great, even with coarse and bad people, that men, even without any religion themselves, have been often heard to say to their children: "What! you are going to make your first Communion! You are preparing for your first Communion, and yet no better behaved!" There is an instinct in this of good Christian feeling, which influences them whether they will or no.

And thus, my friend, I repeat, what a joy and honour to be admitted to a Catechism in which one is preparing for one's first Communion, and above all to a week-day Catechism, for then we feel certain that we shall make it. How attached one becomes to one's Catechists, to the Chapel where we all come two or three times a week, to the children whose happy condition we share, and with whom we are getting ready for the greatest happiness in life! Affections and links are formed there which are never forgotten and cannot be broken.

I remember still, not only our Dignitaries, but so many other names which have continued to be dear to me all my life, because they were the names of children with whom I prepared for my first Communion. Paul Labesse, Charles Bataillard, Charles de Mornay, Edouard de Boisgelin, Charles Bocquet, and so many others. Paul Labesse was distinguished among us by the zeal and carefulness with which he made his *Diligences:* he let me look at them sometimes in the Church of S. Sulpice, before the Catechism, as we were standing near the sacristy, silently waiting for the moment to go in. I admired them much for their extreme neatness, and the beautiful and

careful writing. He had put in them blue ribbons, which I can see now; and more than this, he had added in a note some passages from the *Imitation* which bore upon the Instruction; I admired all this very much. I did not think it possible that I could have done it as well.

M. Lacombe was the head of the week-day Catechism for Whitsuntide. There were more of us than at the Easter Catechism, and we had a great many Catechists. It was in the Chapel called the *Chapel des Allemands:* the girls were on one side, the boys on the other. A very steady child, Eugénie Naigeon, was *Intendante* of the girls. The boys' Catechists were M. Lacombe, M. Menjaud, and a good M. Durozel, whom we loved much. M. Druon, a very learned man, and a grand M. Caron were the Catechists for the girls, with M. Poiloup; but his weak health did not allow him to go on with it.

On the day the week-day Catechism was opened, M. Lacombe told us the names of all these gentlemen, and praised each one of them to us; not praising their talent or their cleverness, but their zeal, their kindness to good children, their gentleness and also their firmness, so that we were filled with great confidence in them, with great affection and great respect; and they were not slow in showing us by their zeal, their devotion, and their tenderness, that never on earth had we been so loved by any one, except our parents.

The arrangement of places was made with great order and care. I remember I was placed on the second form, and Paul Labesse on the third; Paulin Coincy, the *Intendant,* was first in the first form.

The special Instructions of the week-day Catechism began at once: they turned upon Grace, Prayer, the Sacraments; and in particular on Penitence and the Eucharist, and consequently dwelt on the necessity of amendment and conversion, if we would make a good first Communion.

I made *Diligences* on each of these Instructions; and I always added, according to custom, a prayer and a good resolution. With the Sunday *Diligence,* this made at least three a week, from ten to twelve pages each. All my days, all my life was taken up with it; no other work was possible;

all my affections, all my feelings, my whole soul was there during the three months that the Catechism lasted. The first Communion was the great end to be attained; the sole object of my thoughts. We felt also that our Catechists only thought of us, that they had given us their heart, and our own was drawn closer and closer to them; we began even to be respectfully familiar with them; when we met them in the street or in the *Place de S. Sulpice*, we went to them, we saluted them; they greeted us very kindly, saying some encouraging words. You can easily imagine how much all this impressed our minds, filled them, took possession of them.

The Instruction on sacrilegious Communion, which was given by M. Lacombe, impressed us greatly. I remember also an extremely interesting Instruction from M. Druon, on the holy Mass; he entered into details which made us understand what we saw at the Altar, but of which we had not taken much notice, whenever we attended Mass. I remember, among other things, that when telling us that the sacrifice of the Mass represents and contains the sacrifice of the Cross, he made us observe that the chasuble which the Priest wears places the Cross on his shoulders and on his heart. And he read us a passage from the *Imitation*, which proves how ancient this custom was in the Church. These are things which strike children, and which they never forget.

Moreover, to make us take part rightly in listening to the holy Mass, was one of the things to which our Catechists chiefly devoted themselves; as also to teach us to pray well, to inspire us with a love for prayer; to make us pious, and penitent for our sins; to make us confess rightly; and very specially to prepare us well for our general Confession. No doubt the object of the Instructions was to instruct us, but still more to make us better, to convert us; the subjects all tended to this, and they nearly always took the form of exhortation.

The words, the Admonitions of the Head Catechist, which were very frequent, very solemn, very energetic, did more to move our souls than anything else we heard, nothing made so

much impression on us as these Admonitions. They always turned on our faults, our defects, our bad habits, the way to correct them, and also on any good examples and encouragements which might help us. M. Lacombe gave these Admonitions with great authority. In listening we felt that he was speaking to us from the bottom of his heart, and in a spirit of great faith and zeal.

But for the very reason that they desired really to convert us, they took pains that we should be very solidly instructed in our religion. Our Analyses of the Catechism Instructions helped greatly in this; they required besides that we should know the text of our Catechism quite perfectly; every time also they give us difficult questions on the meaning of the most important answers; they would have them understood and explained thoroughly; and then we had the preparation for the examinations; they were very much dreaded; we knew that on these examinations, as they were passed well or ill, depended either our admission to the first Communion, or a final dismissal; we prepared for them, therefore, with great ardour. For my own part, I remember that these examinations frightened me greatly; I passed them, however, fairly well, and these gentlemen kindly told me they were pleased; it was at that time, too, that I began to get on more friendly terms with them, and to be a little more familiar with them.

The examinations once passed, and sure of being admitted to the first Communion, I thought only of my entire conversion, and applied myself more than ever to prepare for my general Confession.

I made it in the very best way I could, and yet I had less joy than after that first Confession which had made me so light-hearted; I had become more serious, I reflected more; after having confessed, I not only felt the joy of having told everything, but the necessity of thoroughly correcting all my faults, of making strong resolutions and keeping them; I had an entirely new life to order and mature.

But the close of the week-day Catechism, the last Instructions of these gentlemen, which became yet more strong and impressive, the Admonitions which M. Lacombe, in his pene-

trating voice, gave us, the encouragement of my Confessor, and more than all, I am bound to say, the beautiful hymns which we sang at the Catechism, kept me up, strengthened me in the good way, and finished the work of bringing me back to God. I remember in particular the deep and lively impression made upon me by two hymns, which since I have learnt were from the pen of Louis Racine:

"Grâce, grâce, suspends l'arrêt de tes vengeances,
Et détourne un moment tes regards irrités!
J'ai péché, mais je pleure. . . "

And:

"Puniras-tu, Seigneur, dans ta justice
D'un fils ingrat les longs égarements? . . . "

As we sang the beautiful and touching verses of this hymn, all our souls were taken captive, and as it were bent down under the hand of God, which seemed to be over our heads, to bless us and to save us, if we repented.

One remembrance of this time gives me perhaps a still surer ground for comfort, namely, certain prayers which I made at home when I was quite alone; when, feeling the need of asking God for pardon of my sins and the grace of a good first Communion, I profited by my solitude, and falling on my knees, sought to obtain that grace which I desired. They were very good and very real prayers, and the inspiration to make them was certainly a great grace from God.

Finally, the Retreat filled up the measure of all these graces all the blessings of this admirable week-day Catechism.

It was given, and very well, by M. l'Abbé de Quélen, who afterwards became Archbishop of Paris. I remember still the impression made on us by a sermon on sin, and on the consequences of sin. In describing the punishment of the Jews who had killed our Lord, and the siege of Jerusalem, he rose to a great height of eloquence, to judge by our emotion; we were all much affected and in tears.

On Wednesday morning, after the Act of Contrition, I at last received absolution; it was a moment of great and deep sweetness; my joy did not show itself much outwardly; I should have been afraid to lose it, but within it was very great

and very blessed. I remember my pleasure when in the afternoon I found myself again in our dear Chapel, with our good Catechists; they all looked happy because we were happy, we were all reconciled with God; the end of all their efforts and of our own was at last happily attained.

I remember also the sweet and holy friendship which we all had one for another. These three months which we had just spent together in the grand and holy work of our return to God, all these various emotions, and then the joy we experienced at having received absolution, and being at last in port, and on the very eve of our first Communion, all this inspired us with something of tenderness and affection one towards another, and with mutual confidences. After the evening meeting, which was truly delicious, every countenance bearing an almost heavenly look of joy, of sweetness, and calm, it pleased us to stay under the large porch of S. Sulpice, waiting till these gentlemen had countersigned our certificates of Confession; we talked together, and I remember still these good conversations, how sweet, and pure, and charming they were; we could hardly bear to separate.

The next morning, by five o'clock, we were up, our first Communion dress on, our white ribbons on our arms, our candles in our hand; I can see myself still, in my place in this magnificent Church of S. Sulpice, in the first seat, praying and singing, "*Troupe innocente d'enfants chéris des cieux,*" with great devotion, with my hymn-book, a little volume in 12mo, which I have kept, and which lies before me now, as I write these lines.

With ourselves of the first Communion, and those who were to renew it, we were nearly five hundred, and filled the whole of the nave. The ceremonies were very beautiful, particularly the two grand processions; the morning one, when we went from our Chapel into the nave of the Church, and the evening, when we were conducted to the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin for the solemn Consecration; we walked slowly in two long files, in the morning singing Fénélon's beautiful hymn, "*Mon bien-aimé ne paraît pas encore,*" and in the evening, "*Vous qu'en ces lieux combla de ses bienfaits.*" An immense and

attentive crowd filled the side-aisles of the Church, moving for us to pass, and never wearying of gazing in silence on this beautiful and religious sight, which in its august and yet simple pomp had in it a most touching combination, as it were, of innocence and majesty.

The ceremony of the first Communion was of course the most beautiful of all, but I have no recollection of it ; our eyes were then closed to everything which was passing around us on earth, we only saw the Altar, the Tabernacle, the holy Table, and when the moment arrived for us to draw near, we were all moved, penetrated, as it were lost in the presence of God; we had scarcely any consciousness of things around us.

The feeling, at the first moment after Communion, was overwhelming ; then came confidence, thankfulness, deep joy, heavenly felicity; then all the expressions of our love to God, those mysterious outpourings from the awakened soul of a child into the heart of Jesus Christ, Who reserves His most ineffable marks of love and tenderness for this solemn and sweet time.

Many, having returned to their place, and on their knees in thanksgiving, shed tears in abundance.

All our parents were there in reserved places, and watched us from afar with much emotion. Our Catechists, I remember, wept for joy as they looked at us. They were at last sweetly reaping the fruit of all their trouble. And we, lifted up by the grace of God in our hearts and the sacred magnificence all around us, we sang our beautiful hymns with transport, we tasted so pure, so exalted, so divine a happiness, that it seemed to us that the happiness of heaven could not surpass it.

One of the deepest and most delicate emotions of these great days springs from this, that in the midst of these majestic ceremonies, the children feel that they are a sight for admiration both to men and angels, nothing tends more to elevate and purify them. They are treated, loved, and looked upon as the very children of God, as pure and sublime souls, as privileged beings ; the impression of this is ineffable, no human impression comes near it.

The day finished by the solemn renewal of our baptismal

promises, by a magnificent *Salut*, and finally, by the Consecration to the ever-blessed Virgin.

With what transport we made the vaults of the great Church of S. Sulpice resound with the cry, a thousand times repeated: "*À Jésus Christ, à Jésus Christ, pour toujours!*" When we received the last Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at the *Salut*, how the happiness of our first Communion came back to us; and finally, with what mixed feelings of sorrow and joy we went back into the Church to the Chapel of the most Holy Virgin! Joy, for we were going to consecrate ourselves to Mary, our heavenly Mother; sorrow, for the last moment of this beautiful day had come, and directly afterwards we must all part. And in fact, immediately after the Consecration, which was performed by M. Menjaud, we again came down the steps of the sanctuary, and went in procession out of the Church, giving one last look at the Altar, where in the morning we had for the first time received our divine Saviour.

These last moments were so touching, this last procession was so beautiful, we were still so happy, so honoured in the sight of heaven and earth, that we could not bear to break our ranks! We went on as we were, into the very middle of the Place S. Sulpice, which was crowded with people; then at last our mothers came near, called us, and we threw ourselves into their arms.

After this beautiful day, with what pleasure we went again to the Church! with what joy we met our Catechists again! And on the next day, when for the Mass of Thanksgiving, and the following Sunday, for the last Catechism, we put on again our first Communion dress and our white ribbon, how happy it made us! We felt clothed anew with virtue and grace, with innocence, with purity, with happiness, and with honour.

Even now, when I try to count up all the blessings which God then gave to my soul, it seems to me the truest thing I can say is that I felt the truth of the Prophet's words, "*Oculi omnium in te sperant, Domine, et tu das illis escam in tempore opportuno. . .*" Yes, truly, a first Communion is that. For

me it was really the accepted time, the day of salvation. For a long time I had been unhappy at being so far from God, my soul had in secret turned towards Him, and in the depth of my distress I asked of Him the divine food which alone could renew my life, and satisfy my deep needs: "and there it was, O Lord, that Thou didst open Thy hand, '*aperuisti manum tuam*,' that Thou didst fill with Thy gifts, and nourish with Thy sacred flesh and with Thy precious blood, this poor little creature, '*et imples omne animal benedictione*.' "

And reflecting on it now, I repeat, it seems to me exactly what takes place in a first Communion, well made.

And yet, my friend, I should like to add, because it suggests a deeply instructive observation on the nature and the heart of children,—the day of my first Communion, of my Confirmation, of the Act of Thanksgiving being over, in a certain sense I was happy, perhaps quite as much in the love of my Catechists as in the love of God. Clearly these two affections were in reality but one, but perhaps I was more conscious of the one than the other; I had never loved my Catechists so much. The fact is, that I loved and reverenced God in them; it was through them that God had taught me to love Him, it was through them that God had given me all His blessings. I felt that I owed all my happiness to them, and that it was the will of God that on earth I should owe it to them.

Though they were still so young, they all seemed to me venerable; I never thought even that they could sin; at that time I never had a doubt on the point; their kindness, their modesty, their gentleness, their devotion, their zeal made them to me like angels on earth.

I delighted to embrace them when I saw them again, I did not like those who did not receive us very affectionately; I thought they did not love children as our Lord had loved them. M. Druon, though very good, was very austere, and did not embrace us when we went to see him in the court of the Grand-Séminaire. M. Menjaud said to him, "it pleases them," and he did it then, and we were enchanted. I remember it was said of a certain Seminarist, who however was not a Catechist: "he does not love children," and I was scandalized.

I know not how better to make you understand and feel why I loved all my Catechists so tenderly, than by saying: These men were to me the image of virtue and the friends of God on earth, and they loved me! . . .

No, and I must repeat it here, whoever does not love children, whoever has not heard our Saviour's words, "*Feed My lambs*," let him depart! he is not made for this sweet and grand ministry.

I have spoken of a good M. Durosel, who had a remarkably good and venerable appearance. He gave me once a little engraving, quite new and very picturesque, of the flight into Egypt. The holy Virgin was seated on the ass, holding the Child Jesus in her arms, and with the help of S. Joseph crossing a little brook. It charmed my fancy, and touched my heart. I cannot describe the delight this picture was to me, and the charm I found in it; I delighted to gaze at it, it refreshed my soul. M. Lacombe gave me also a charming picture of the Blessed Virgin holding the Child Jesus, Who is crowning her, in her arms; that also is one of which I have a very sweet recollection.

I made acquaintance besides with all the other Catechists of the Grand-Séminaire, with M. Dumarsais, M. Caillaud, M. Dumesnildot, and M. Levasseur, who came once to the underground Chapel to explain the *Billets* to us.

But M. Menjaud was the one I loved best of all; it was he who consecrated us to the Blessed Virgin on the evening of our first Communion; it was charming; as I have said, we filled the whole of the beautiful Chapel of S. Sulpice, singing the beautiful hymn:

> "Vous qu'en ces lieux combla de ses bienfaits,
> Une Mère auguste et chérie. . ."

I was placed in the sanctuary itself, on the highest step, touching the Altar. M. Menjaud spoke to perfection; he was radiant, and we were all enchanted.

The days which came after the first Communion were delicious. Perhaps, my dear friend, you will think that I am going into very minute details; but these details, even after so

many years, are still quite fresh to me! And moreover they are of great importance towards the object I am proposing to myself in this letter, which is to show you how deeply a child's soul may be worked upon by a Catechism, if properly carried out. It was not only my Christian life which was henceforth decided, but also my sacerdotal vocation. Allow me then to tell you all these little things, which had such great consequences for me.

Loving these gentlemen tenderly, I continually went to see them in their recreation-time; they always received me with the greatest kindness, and I have had no greater enjoyment in my life. In particular, the day after the first Communion, nothing could equal our happiness. There was then a custom which has since been abolished,—and I greatly regret it; we were invited in the morning, after the Mass of Thanksgiving, to come all together in the evening to the Seminary, to spend the recreation-time with these gentlemen in the garden. We were all still in the fervour and perfect purity of our first Communion, and all filled with the fresh and tender feelings with which it had inspired us; we were in a state of enthusiastic joy. I remember in particular that we were very curious to know how these gentlemen amused themselves. They will play with us, we said. An hour before the appointed time, we were all in that dear and much-to-be-regretted street *Pot-de-Fer*, at the door of the Seminary; we went in with cries of joy. There I saw again M. Teysseire, I was presented to him; there I saw for the first time the Superior-General of S. Sulpice, that good M. Duclaux; I saw M. Garnier, and M. Félix, who talked to us about the Blessed Virgin. To me all these men seemed to be venerable and perfect saints; probably we made too much noise for them, but they were indulgent, and bore it. They even prolonged the recreation-time a quarter of an hour, in honour of us. I remember our Catechist took me, together with Paulin Coincy, our *Intendant*, as a deputation to M. Teysseire, to ask this favour of him, and this made us very happy.

After this time, I took no pleasure in any one but these gentlemen, and the best children of the Catechism. We went

to see each other; we encouraged each other in piety; we lent each other good books. Our parents were delighted to see us so happily disposed. For my own part, I gave up everything which was not in harmony with my first Communion; every other friendship had become incompatible with my soul, and with my tastes. I went continually to S. Sulpice to serve at the Masses either of my Confessor or of some other Priest, and particularly a certain Spanish Priest, who edified me greatly by his devout manner, and by his thanksgiving, which he always made very regularly, on his knees, in the chapel of S. Denis, near the large sacristy.

My friends and I delighted to instruct ourselves in religion; in our young and innocent simplicity we were often very severe; we scarcely allowed of a compromise in anything. Thus, I remember that one day three of us went to the sacristy of S. Sulpice, to ask a M. Gol, whose white hair and good looks inspired us with confidence, whether a child ought not *always* to eat dry bread, for six weeks, rather than eat meat in Lent. I held to that then, but I should not be so severe now.

I have said that I had separated from all my old friends, who might have been dangerous to me. I looked upon them with real compassion. M. Lacombe would have wished that I should make an effort to bring them back to God, but I could hardly bring myself to it; I felt too indignant at their irreligious ways.

Besides which, the Catechism and my first Communion had inspired me with a great liking for work and study; and except for the pleasure of going to see my pious friends and these gentlemen at the Seminary, I hardly ever went out, and was always at work. As I had not many books, I remember that M. Lacombe asked M. Druon, who had an excellent library, to lend me some, among others Rollin's *Ancient History*.

I devoted myself more than ever to my *Diligences*. The meetings of the Sunday Catechism up to the end of the year delighted me. I went there as if to my own family, or to a fête.

I had more than a patriotic feeling now for this Chapel. All my best friends were there. We sang there the praises of God together, and these gentlemen, seeing us so pious, were

kinder than ever to us. It was delicious. I began even to go to the Academy, and to know better and esteem more the elder members, Sausier, the D'Estiennes, the Missiessys, Paul-Emile Botta and his brother, sons of the celebrated historian. I remember we were all desired to pray for Paul-Emile's mother, who was seriously ill. M. Paul-Emile Botta is now French Consul at Beyrout. At that time I had even daily communication with the Grand-Séminaire, on account of the dialogue for the distribution of prizes, in which I was given a part; M. Lacombe practised us in reciting it well. This dialogue was upon sights, and it inspired me with such repugnance for theatrical representations, that I scrupled even about simply reading a theatrical piece, and when my Confessor gave me leave to go once to *Franconi*, I, who had so loved these things, decided not to avail myself of the permission.

At the end of the year, these gentlemen invited us to a grand party in the country, at Issy, in the park belonging to the Seminary. This custom has also, since then, been abolished at S. Sulpice, and I cannot help regretting it greatly. A young Seminarist, very good, very pious, who has since founded the work of the Little Prisoners, and whose zeal has prematurely worn him out, M. Arnoul, took us there in the morning. This charming little excursion delighted us; we played great games at *barres* with these gentlemen. You may suppose how we enjoyed making them prisoners. Then we had a grand luncheon in the refectory. In particular there was an ever-flowing fountain of milk, which amazed us, and which we drew upon continually.

I was so happy on this day, that on the Feast of the Assumption, after having communicated in the morning, in our dear Chapel, I went again to Issy in the afternoon. The grace of God, Who willed to inspire in me henceforward the desire for the sacerdotal life, found its auxiliaries, even unknown to themselves, in all these young ecclesiastics; my almost familiar relations with them enabled me to see how perfectly lovable they were, and their heartfelt joy, which was reflected in their countenance. On that day I was made a member of *S. Scapulaire aux Carmes*. M. Dufouleur and M. Arnoul—they were

standing at the door of the sacristy of the Grand-Séminaire (I can see them now)—congratulated me; M. Arnoul said that we were brothers, and that touched me. M. Dufouleur then showed me a little reliquary which he wore, and which contained a piece of the true Cross. I kissed it with great reverence, and was greatly moved by it, thinking and saying aloud, "Perhaps our Lord has touched this very piece of the true Cross!"

On our way to Issy with Charles Bataillard and two other friends, we went into the Carmelite Chapel, and we admired the picture of souls in purgatory, over whom an angel is pouring, from a chalice, the blood of Jesus Christ. This picture is still there, and I never see it again without a pleasant recollection. Truly our conversation was in heaven.

A holy American missionary, M. Bruté, the Angelic Bruté, as M. Teysseire called him, gave us our Communion on the Feast of the Assumption. A young M. Baillet, who had recently entered the Seminary, said, "Ah! he will speak to them as he does to his dear neophytes. . ." And he did speak to us with great zeal. He was afterwards Bishop of Vincennes, and died in the odour of sanctity.

About this time, M. de Bonald, now Cardinal-Archbishop of Lyon, gave us one of our monthly Communions. He had come back from Rome, and this circumstance interested us greatly.

Priests celebrated for their labours and their zeal were always chosen for these great epochs of Communion, and for the festivals of the Catechism.

Monseigneur the Bishop of Quimper gave us the Sacrament of Confirmation. The ceremony was magnificent, and all the joy and all the splendour of our first Communion was renewed for us. And for myself, one indelible remembrance belongs to that day. In the evening, going out of the Church and down the steps of the great portico of S. Sulpice, in that magnificent procession of children of which I have already spoken, M. Menjaud whispered in my ear, and asked me what I wished to be in the world. I immediately thought of being a Priest. And yet I dared not own it to him. Perhaps I was afraid he

might think it too audacious in me to aspire to the priesthood; as a fact I answered, an advocate. And I had really thought of it for a moment, but thenceforth I thought only of the priesthood.

And this is how the thing came about; at the Catechism, I was close to Henri Beaussier and Adolphe Bernant. I had for a long time admired their behaviour; they were perhaps the two best children in the Catechism. Then all at once, they were not in their place. I was told that they had entered the little Community, founded by M. Teysseire, in the *Rue du Regard*. I instantly resolved to follow them there.

Adolphe Bernant had the first prize for good behaviour, Henri Beaussier the second. I had the first prize for *Diligences*. I was given two beautiful volumes, which pleased me greatly: the *Life of Theodosius*, by Fléchier, and the *Manners of the Israelites*, by Fleury. I read them in the holidays, to console myself for having no Catechism to go to, no more *Diligences* to make.

For, the Catechisms over, I felt a terrible blank, an indescribable sadness. I felt deprived of my heaven on earth; my poor little soul had lost all that had delighted it. I looked forward to no joy till I could again be with Henri Beaussier and Adolphe Bernant.

One day, when I felt very sorrowful, I went to Issy, to see M. Arnoul; I remember that, to beguile my sadness, I read the whole length of the way; and after having confided to him my trouble, I opened my heart to him on my projects. M. Menjaud was away, or I should have spoken to him in the first place. I had so given my heart to my Catechists, that when I heard they were gone away for the vacation, I was very much astonished; I thought that having prepared children for their first Communion, they ought never to leave them;[1] and I was only reconciled on being told that they had not seen their parents for a year.

[1] M. Borderies, during the first years of his Catechism at the Sainte-Chapelle, and at S. Thomas Aquinas, had no vacations. "After the first Communion we should never separate again," he said to me; "except those children whose parents take them away to the country, and who leave the Catechism with much regret."

It was all arranged, however, at Issy, with M. Arnoul. It was then the end of September, and the beginning of October was the time fixed for my entrance into the little Community. I went to see M. Bardin, the director of the house, who, I am bound to say, did not much please me. He received me with a certain affability, as did also my professor; but it was not like my Catechists.

I shall dwell, my dear friend, on certain details here, which will explain to you my surprise, almost my sorrow, at first at least, in a house where nevertheless the work of God was carried on with zeal; they will help you to feel, what this experience taught me, that there is scarcely anything on earth which can compare with the strong and sweet influence of a real and good catechism.

The first of October, I arrived at No. 20, Rue du Regard, at half-past six in the morning, instead of six. The Superior, whom I met, said to me, "You are a stupid one, you have missed a good meditation. Come with me." I followed him into the Chapel. It was the Mass of the Holy Spirit, and afterwards a class. The *Veni Sancte* was sung without the *Ave Maria;* Hippolyte Chanal, now Curé of Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, and even then very pious, remarked upon it. "*Bien*, my child," said gravely but jokingly a M. Crescent, of Amiens, our professor, and a good man enough, but somewhat too jocose. And it all did not please me much. I was pleased to meet some of my Catechism friends, but somehow even they seemed to me less attractive. The truth is that less happy days had then begun for me. The beau-ideal which had taken possession of my soul at the Catechisms of S. Sulpice disappeared. That friendship, which was so pure, so active, so paternal, so watchful on one side, so grateful and so tender on the other, came to an end. Other friendships, and good ones, began, but not so perfect, and then came ceaseless work, classic successes, vanity. I was not loved as I had been at the Catechism, at least I did not feel that I was loved; and I was myself less lovable. All the harm came from that. I remember that, in the little Community, my greatest happiness was when our old Catechists came to see us. Ah! it is

true to say, the pastoral ministry is the most beautiful of all ministries! A pastor in his parish, in the fold of Jesus Christ, devoted to his flock, is admirable; it is the *Pasce oves*. But yet more beautiful, the beau-ideal of heart and tenderness, is the *Pasce agnos*. Nothing can be compared to this; it is indescribable and heavenly.

For it is in fact the most disinterested, the most pure, the most free from prejudice, of all ministries, and it is addressed to that age which is the freshest, the most lovable, and the most trusting

On the contrary, you go to a house of education, even a good and Christian one; well, the fact is, it does not take possession of your soul in the same way, your heart does not find the same sweetness in it. Why so? For there too is priestly devotion, and real love for the children. Can it be because there everything is official and ordered, everything is compulsory and exacted of you, and thus all heart and spontaneity, everything that is free, and tender, and fresh, disappears, or at any rate is nearly quenched?

M. Bardin, who was of a cold nature, seldom came near us. Yet I remember we celebrated the anniversary of his first Mass with a certain solemnity; but how different it was from the festivals at the Catechism! Still there were very good Priests in the little Community. M. de Saint-Yvés, whom we liked, and who played with us; but above all a young M. Desbouillons, a real saint, very ascetic. He wore a hair-shirt, at least we thought so, and he desired to go to China. That pleased us. We loved the saints, we liked to hear accounts of extraordinary mortifications, iron chains, *disciplines*, distant missions, everything that was grand, generous, apostolic; we could be attracted by all that. There was also M. Poiloup. I loved him at once greatly; he had the reputation of being a saint, and had a sweet countenance; and he spoke well and with unction. I remember still one subject of meditation he gave us after his Mass, when, as he said, "*his lips were still coloured with the blood of Jesus Christ*"; these words greatly moved us.

After this I spent six years in study, either in the little

Community, or in the little Seminary of S. Nicholas; and it was not long before I again had the happiness of joining the Catechisms of S. Sulpice.

All these last details, my dear friend, were necessary, as leading on to what I propose to narrate to you, if you will allow me, in a second letter.

SECOND LETTER.

A FIRST CATECHISM AT S. SULPICE.

My dear Friend,

In my first letter I have discoursed to you on what the Catechisms of S. Sulpice were to myself, when I went to them to make my first Communion. I have told you of everything which then produced the greatest impression upon us, and which had the strongest power to touch our hearts. You will have observed in particular, how alive we were to the zeal and devotion of our Catechists, and in how great a degree their paternal affection and their tender care drew us to the love of God. I am now going to give you, no longer my experiences as a child, but as a Catechist; less fresh and simple, no doubt, than the former, but quite as true, and written after much thought and reflection, and therefore even more instructive and more useful.

I will take up events, if you please, from the time of my entering the Grand-Séminaire, at Issy; and I will speak to you in succession of the various Catechisms in which I have been employed, that is to say, the Catechism of first Communion, for boys, in the underground Chapel; then the week-day Catechisms, and the large Catechisms of Perseverance, for girls, in the *Chapel des Allemands.*

I.

The name of S. Sulpice ought to be dear to me till my latest breath; there it was that I received all my good gifts from God; first at that great epoch of my first Communion, which was a time of infinite mercy; then in the Chapel of Lorette, at Issy, at the commencement of my study of philo-

sophy and during the preceding Retreat; then at all my ordinations; and finally at the Catechisms, which I began to hold when I was at the Grand-Séminaire, in Paris, and which have been of such profit to my own soul.

I will say here also, since I have the opportunity,—it was at S. Sulpice that I came to understand the grand mind of the ancient Church of France, its beautiful and pure traditions of virtue, of priestly wisdom, of piety, of reverence, of docility; there it was that I made the acquaintance of those noble and holy men, who, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, had inherited the past grandeurs of the French clergy; M. Emery, M. de Quélen, M. Frayssinous, M. Borderies, M. Clausel de Coussergues, M. Clausel de Montals, M. Boyer, M. Desjardins, Père de Maccarty, M. Legris-Duval, M. de Rauzan, the Duke de Rohan, the venerable M. Duclaux, M. Garnier, M. Mollevaut, M. Teysseire, M. Gosselin, M. de Forbin-Janson, and many others besides. They were very superior to the distinguished men among the clergy of the eighteenth century. Though still young at the time I speak of, the greater number had confessed the faith, at the peril of their life, during the *terreur;* many had been in exile; the revolution had heaped up ruins around them and on their way. They had the ardour of the newly-returned, the zeal of religious re-construction, they had a certain divine inspiration, a mixture of energy and prudence, which compelled them to re-conquer. In truth it was they, with M. Emery at their head, who repaired the Church of France.

The distinctive character of these men was strength of faith, and the practice of the severer virtues, but combined with great simplicity. I remember among other things M. Borderies once said of M. Frayssinous: "M. Frayssinous is a Priest whom I honour more than any. He would be a martyr; I am not worthy to untie his shoe-strings; I should kiss his feet." M. Frayssinous never knew of this grand testimony given by his friend, but he was well worthy of it. "Nothing is truer or more beautiful than those words," said Père de Ravignan one day, when I quoted them to him; and he also was a good judge in this matter.

It was one of the great graces of my youth to have known such men at S. Sulpice, where they all came; to have admired and loved them, to have enjoyed their goodness and felt the grace of God which was in them; and to have been beloved by them. If I have been devoted, as I have been, to the work of Catechisms, it is to their affection, to their advice, to their example, that I owe it.

I entered at Issy, in October 1821, and immediately after my course of philosophy, in 1822, my elder fellow-students, who were then in the Great Seminary in Paris, and engaged in the Catechisms of S. Sulpice, desired that I should come there, to be with them, and share their zeal. I refused, and did not consent to leave Issy till 1823; and even then, curiously enough, I had almost resolved to have nothing to do with Catechisms. I did not feel myself fit for it. I had preserved so strong a recollection of the blessings which God had through them given to me, that I could not possibly believe that, young and imperfect in so many ways as I still was, I could be employed with any profit, hardly with any propriety, in such a ministry.

However, once at Paris, and surrounded and strongly pressed by those of my friends who were Catechists, called upon besides by the Directors of the Great Seminary, I made up my mind; and in reality, I am bound to say, it was with pleasure and a secret joy in my heart. The confidence that my friends showed towards me and their entreaties attracted me partly; obedience and authority also strengthened me; and then I had a certain instinctive presentiment, that as God, by the voice of my superiors, had called me to the work, my soul would find the good of it.

The friends who pressed me to join them in the Catechisms were: M. Jaricot, who has since died at Lyon, in the odour of sanctity, a victim of his love to the sick; he was brother to that generous woman who founded, in the Catholic world, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith; M. Dupuch, the aged Bishop of Alger; M. Blancart de Bailleul, afterwards Archbishop of Rouen; M. de Charbonnel, Bishop of Toronto, now retired, and a Capuchin; M. de la Hailandière, formerly

Bishop of Vincennes; M. Jacquemet, now Bishop of Nantes; M. Ruellet, now Curé of Besançon; M. Darcimoles, who was successively Bishop of Puy and Archbishop of Aix; M. Monet, afterwards Sulpician; M. Montel, afterwards a Missionary. I do not here name M. Dupont des Loges, afterwards Archbishop of Metz; or M. Chalandon, now Archbishop of Aix; they came to the Catechism a little later on.

I was given the choice between the large Catechism of *Perseverance* for girls, and the Catechism for boys in the *underground Chapel*. Though my best friends were at the *Perseverance*, I preferred the boys, and that poor underground Chapel where, a few years before, I had come myself to prepare for my first Communion; and where, in the tender and holy friendship of my Catechists, and in the infinite goodness of God, I had found blessings so sweet that the recollection was ever in my heart, and drew me back there irresistibly.

When I first came into this Chapel, I remember that my first glance was for the place I had formerly occupied, near the Sanctuary, during the whole year of my first Communion; and again, I looked with emotion, outside the enclosure, on that other place, where I had come the first day, and leaning on the balustrade, had received my first impression of grace from the Catechist.

Then I turned to look at the children, who now were filling our old places, and of whom I was to have the charge. They, too, were here for the first time. All their eyes were turned on us, and as they looked on the faces of these unknown Catechists who were to have so great an influence both on their first Communion and on their whole life, their feelings were clearly a mixture of simple confidence, and yet of involuntary uneasiness and anxiety. I am bound to say that these young souls, with their pure and ardent gaze, at once took possession of me. I caught fire immediately, and was deeply interested in the beautiful work before me.

My place was nearly in the centre, on a raised seat, whence I could see everything, and particularly that part over which I was to preside.

Among the children who surrounded me, there were several whom I at once remarked for their good behaviour; I will tell you their names, which after so many years it is a pleasure to me to repeat. They were Alfred des Esserts, a good, sweet, and dear child, now a distinguished writer and laureate of the French Academy; Charles P——, who used to come constantly to see us at the Grand-Séminaire; Auguste P——, very devout and very good, with his little plump figure, his great black eyes, and his little overcoat and collar; he served at Mass with charming gravity; he is now an eminent magistrate in one of our highest Imperial Courts.

I do not know if these lines are ever destined to meet the eyes of Julien G—— and of Jules V——, both pupils at M. Lemoine's school. Whatever their course may have been, perhaps they will not have forgotten their joy on that day, when I chose them for my first good marks; nor the love which God put into my heart for them and for all their little friends at the Catechism. I have held Catechisms since for many other children, and I have loved them all, and greatly, but never one more than those to whom, in the underground Chapel, I gave the first-fruits of my zeal; none ever went deeper to my heart.

At this first meeting, M. Jaricot, who was Head Catechist, was almost the only one to speak, and he gave all the necessary notices and Admonitions concerning the conduct of the Catechism; he interested us all very much. M. Monnet, who was a Catechist of the preceding year, gave the Instruction; there was no Homily that day, the explanation of the rule of the Catechism taking its place.

Though quite a new Catechist, I had nevertheless to say a few words at the end, in giving good marks for behaviour to three or four children who seemed to me to have been the most attentive throughout the Catechism. Every Catechist granted some. When it came to my turn to lift up my voice, I did it, not without some embarrassment, but still feeling keenly what pleasure I was giving to these children by according them these good marks, and I felt at once what a power it gave one over these young souls.

Each Catechist gave two, three, and sometimes four of these good marks, and I must say that nothing equalled the pleasure, either for the children or the Catechists, of receiving or giving these good marks at the end of the Catechism; or rather for us, as I have just hinted, it was much more than a pleasure, for in granting this simple and humble reward, we were exercising a great influence over souls.

The look of the children, their stillness, their attitude, all testified to the Catechists the deep influence which they were then exercising over them. This system of good marks is truly an admirable institution, both for the Catechists who have so very important a part in it, and for the children who are all in suspense and excitement. To be named, singled out, and in such a way, before a whole listening Catechism! How deep the silence became at this delightful and solemn moment! how all eyes were turned successively on each Catechist, who, when asked by the Head, gave the names of the good children! What eagerness! what beating of heart! what joy on one hand, what anxious longing on the other! . . . And how we all of us felt it!

That one moment would suffice to give the youngest Catechist an insight into this great ministry, and to reward a zealous Catechist for all his trouble. He feels that he is giving so much pleasure, and at the same time that he has in his power this grand, gentle, and profitable resource in dealing with these souls, which are so free and lively, and yet so pure, so docile and tender, and are turning gratefully to him with love and entire confidence!

I remembered, also, all the good I had myself, in other days, received from the pictures given me by my Catechists. I chose from my best, and bought some of them. I preferred those which represent our Lord; He it was whom I desired to show to these dear children, and to enthrone in their hearts. I had not forgotten Fénélon's words, that before all it is Jesus Christ whom we must teach to know and to love in the Catechism.

The next Sunday, my part was to give questions; I recognized its importance at once, prepared myself as well as I

possibly could, and did it with the greatest care; then, a fortnight after, I held a Conference with the Abbé de Charbonnel. He was a very pressing adversary, and confused me several times; I thought I should have stopped short, and I was a little humiliated about it. In the little council which we always held after each meeting, the Head Catechist told me kindly, and rightly, that in one's first *début* some embarrassment must always be expected, and that consoled me.

The first Sunday in Advent, I gave the Homily, on the Last Judgment; I had carefully prepared it, and it seemed to me that I made a somewhat strong impression on the children; at least, I tried to think so, and the Catechists, my colleagues, were good enough to say the same.

The first Instruction that I gave was upon the hidden and the public life of our Lord. In composing it, Bossuet's *Elevations* on the Mysteries helped me greatly. This Instruction gave great pleasure to the children, and did great good to me, and strongly developed in my soul a devotion to the Holy Childhood. For you must observe, my friend, a Catechist who loves his children, when he speaks to them with affection, and tries to persuade them of a truth or a virtue, in doing them good, does yet more to himself.

I gave another Instruction a month later, on the *four last things;* I am bound to say that my colleagues thought it very indifferent, and they judged rightly. It was not an Instruction, but more like four not very instructive Homilies. Again I was a little discouraged by my want of success, but I was very wrong; for as the good Abbé Jaricot had said, a young Catechist must not expect to succeed all at once.

My discouragement, however, did not last long; very soon a strange and quite unexpected circumstance happened, which, on my life as a Catechist and shepherd of souls, had one of those decisive influences which one hardly meets with twice or three times in the course of a life. The truth is, that though I had then a great desire to do well, I hardly knew how to set about it. I had not the Catechistic *sense;* or if I had it a little in my heart, I had it not in my mind. In speaking to these dear children, I used phrases, and my rhetoric veiled

the clearness of my Instructions; it even half-extinguished any unction and fire in my Homilies. I was afraid of being too simple, too familiar; I ornamented my style; in short, I wrote. Generally, by inexperience and youth, we all fall into one of these two faults—we are either too familiar, or too ornamental; and as to myself, in desiring to avoid the first of these failings, I fell into the other, and sometimes even declaimed, which is the very worst thing in a Catechism; and thus, instead of giving a clear, simple, and strong Instruction on the Last Things, I had made four exhortations which I thought were eloquent, but which had no solidity, and bore no fruit.

I was in this condition when, happily, I met a man who gave me the *sense* I needed; a man who was no longer living, who had just died at the age of thirty, and in the odour of sanctity, but whose voice had sounded in my ears and penetrated my soul to its depths in my early childhood, and in this same Chapel. I have already mentioned M. Teysseire, and it is of him I am now speaking. His words, recovered after his death in some writings, were to me like a revelation, and if I came to be anything of a Catechist, it is to him I owe it. The thing happened in this way; it is a curious story, but it will not be without interest to you, my dear friend, and it has a very great interest for me.

At the Grand-Séminaire I lived in a little room, now pulled down, but which then looked out on the street Pot-de-Fer. One day, in going to it, I passed through a long dark corridor, where one of my fellow-students had just turned out a heap of rubbish from his room. I stumbled against something in the dark, and stooping down, I saw in the dust some small manuscript papers, crumpled up and torn; I picked up one, and going to a window, the one in the middle of the corridor, I tried to read it; I thought I made out that it had to do with the Catechism. This interested me; I picked up several more, and succeeded in deciphering them. They were, in fact, fragments of familiar Instructions, Admonitions for first Communion, stories told to children, parables, and a few Homilies. I read all, for I found in them such a charm of language, such

a love for childhood, such a sweet and lively knowledge of that age, such a perfectly delightful freshness of sentiment, that I went on reading, leaning against the mullion of the window; and then, certain that I had discovered a treasure of the most rare description, I went back to the dust-heap, turned it over thoroughly, took all that were left of these strange little papers, and carried them off to my room, to study and consider them at leisure.

From that day the thing was done; I had found the *sense* I needed. To me it was like the pearl in the Gospel, and I would have sold everything to have it for my own. Still, a proper feeling of delicacy made me find the man outside whose door I had discovered these papers, and I owned to him the value I attached to them, though I did not know whose papers they were. He said at once, "They are old notes of M. Teysseire, but they are illegible; it is of no consequence; do what you like with them." And he gave me all that he still had. It was as a fortune to me.

I knew well—for his reputation was still great at S. Sulpice—that M. Teysseire had been the first Catechist of his time, but I am bound to say that what I have since known of him has persuaded me that in no time has he been surpassed. There was in him such a union of vigorous mind and tender heart, of the sweetest simplicity and sublimity and depth, that one might have said he was lisping a heavenly language with the children.

As I have already observed, his writing was very difficult to read; but when once deciphered, it was like a buried diamond shining out. I have quite a peculiar feeling now, in the remembrance of the pleasure which these little papers gave to my mind and my heart; it was to me like discovering a treasure; it was like finding a number of precious stones hidden in the grass and in the woods. It really was a refreshment and joy to my heart, such as those who love nature feel in spring, in finding primroses and violets. I cannot yet think of it without emotion; the mere sight of the handwriting affects me. The fact is, that M. Teysseire was a man with a real genius for children; he had for them, as S. Paul says, the

genius of love: *ingenium caritatis.* It was an immense benefit to me to know him, and it made an entire revolution in my modes of thought; I tried at once to imitate him, though feeling that he was quite inimitable. At least, in studying him as I best could, I conceived a horror of my own failings and of my rhetoric, and I acquired a certain taste for simple truth and for unction, in speaking to children, which has enabled me, though at an infinite distance from my model, sometimes to find the way to their mind and their heart.

II.

This was much, no doubt, and a great gift from God. Still, my friend, it was not long before I was to meet with something quite as important, in another way, as these precious little papers; another apparition was to kindle in my heart a yet brighter flame. I was soon to see souls themselves, shining with that beauty which God's own splendour shining on them gives them even here below.

The Sunday Catechism, as you know, was the remote preparation for first Communion; the nearer and immediate preparation was made in the two week-day Catechisms, one being the Easter, the other the Whitsuntide Catechism.

The Easter Catechism began close upon Lent. M. Jaricot was the Head of it. I took no part in it, but was reserved for Whitsuntide; still, I went to it sometimes, the work having a very strong attraction for me.

I should say that at first I saw nothing extraordinary; but at the end there were two occasions which seemed like a brilliant illumination to my soul.

The first time was on Sunday evening, at the opening of the Retreat; the second on Wednesday evening, the eve of the first Communion.

There was nothing outwardly which gave a great solemnity to this opening of the Retreat; the Chapel was not more adorned than other days; only God and souls were present, but that could be sensibly felt.

The children, moreover, were very few; they hardly filled

a third of the Chapel, all the rest being empty. But they had been admirably prepared; their attention was perfect, they were evidently quite engrossed; their souls could be seen in their faces, with every feeling of joy, of fear, of trust, of penitence. Their feelings broke out when they sang their hymns, in accents which were strong, deep, and repentant; their Catechists all looked so touched, so deeply moved, that the solemnity of God present with souls sent into one's soul a mysterious emotion, mixed with expectation and an indescribable reverence.

The meeting began with the recitation and the explanation of the *Billets* for the opening of the Retreat. You must read them, my dear friend, in the *Manuel du Catéchisme de S. Sulpice*, together with the hymns for this great occasion, if you wish thoroughly to understand what I am now telling you.

Four children chosen out, two from the boys and two from the girls, recited these *Billets*, and so well, with such real and simple emotion, in such a feeling tone; to all the children who were there they gave such wise lessons, such persuasive words, and all in that high and clear voice which God gives at their age, that there resulted a charm which it was impossible to resist.

To explain these *Billets*, the Curé of S. Sulpice was generally invited, or one of his chief Vicars. It was M. Dumas who came on this day. He was a Priest of moderate eloquence, but of great piety, very good, and very affectionate; I have no hesitation in saying that he spoke admirably; and when, joining his hands and looking up to heaven, he cried, with a weak voice, but yet powerful from its emotion, "Oh, my children, my children; you are near, then, to your first Communion. . . . Three days yet. . . . Oh! make this Retreat well,"—it was a cry at once so strong, so tender, coming so sweetly from the very depth of his soul, that all these poor children, and we ourselves, were affected by it. Then occurred one of those extraordinary moments of simultaneous feeling; one of those mysterious silences, when one feels that the hearts of a whole audience are in unison, that it seems but one heart under the hand of God.

I noticed particularly the children who were seated on the front benches. I saw the tears glittering in their large eyes, which were fixed on M. Dumas. But the effect was everywhere the same. All these young souls *shone;* you could see there the penitence of a converted sinner, together with the sweet and innocent joy of the child who is waiting for the coming of Jesus Christ. Over their heads, under the vaults of this old Chapel, there seemed to be an atmosphere of calmness and grace, or, according to S. Bernard's words, the air seemed purer, *aer purior*, heaven more open, *cælum apertius*, and God Himself seemed to come familiarly to them, *familiarior Deus.*

What I experienced then, my dear friend, was such that I would give the whole world to meet with it again. I have presided since at many openings of Retreats, I have always been greatly moved, but never to such a degree; no doubt because for me it was a first impression, and quite unexpected.

However that may be, it was there that the divine and supernatural character of pastoral action on souls began to be revealed to me. All that passes in the first and solemn meeting between God and the soul, I saw, or at least I had a glimpse of, in that bright ray of heaven illuminating these children's souls; it had in it something of infinite purity and power.

Such was the ever memorable impression I received at that first meeting of the Retreat on Sunday evening.

On Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday mornings it was not possible for me to be present. The theological classes which I had to follow at the Grand-Séminaire, which we could never absent ourselves from, did not allow me.

But on Wednesday evening (it was our day for walking) I easily obtained leave to go back to this blessed Chapel, and there I found yet another surprise; I will even say, another delight.

On Sunday, at the opening of the Retreat, I had seen the children penitent, humble, contrite, and, as it were, cast down with the weight of their faults; I had left them with the feelings and the tears of conversion and repentance; the

Wednesday evening I saw angelic, happy, triumphant children; the Retreat had completed the work of divine mercy in their souls. They had all wept for their sins, even that morning; they had all obtained pardon for them at the tribunal of Penitence; henceforth, reconciled to the good God, filled with joy at their absolution, entirely given up to the joyful hope of making their first Communion the next day, they were all radiant.

The Abbé Jaricot, who throughout the Retreat and the week-day Catechism had been so austere, spoke to them with quite heavenly fire, and yet with charming gentleness; he was really like an angel of God.

The joy which shone on all these little attentive and modest faces; peace in their looks and in their hearts; their beautiful hymns which they sang rapturously; the eagerness with which they gathered up all the gracious words which fell from the lips of their holy Catechist; everything, in this little Chapel, had something heavenly about it.

I rested my eyes on them with a religious curiosity and with inexpressible pleasure. I noticed particularly the children, who were the most evidently moved. One was Juliette Des——, who wrote the next day, in her Retreat note-book, at the end of the day: "*Ah! the happiness of heaven must be like a first Communion which never comes to an end;*" and Th. de Cl——, at the moment when M. Jaricot was speaking of the happiness of a child who receives Jesus Christ, a tear was resting on his eyelids; and this tear, lighted up by the ray of grace which from his soul shone in his eyes, together with the smile on his lips, reminded me of those *beautiful tears* spoken of by that poet of antiquity who has best depicted feeling in the heart of man: *lacrimæque decoræ;* and those other tears, mixed with smiles, described by Homer: Δακρυοεν γελασασα.

On that day, my friend, the impression on my mind of souls, of God as present, and of the grand divine work which is accomplished by the sacerdotal ministry, took possession of me for ever. From that time, from that very day, every week-day Catechism, every opening of Retreat, has always made this same impression upon me. It went to the depths

of my heart, and took lasting possession of it. It was the greatest revelation of my life; ever since, all which is not this, all which is not the pure action of grace upon souls, is nothing to me. If I may so speak, I became a Priest and a Pastor on that day; in the measure of my weakness I received the sacred spark, the apostolic fire. Dating from this day, as soon as I am in the presence of souls and I see their looks turned towards me and watching for my words, I only see them; I forget myself; and I can only speak to them as their needs require.

For you, my dear friend, if you have not yet thus come face to face with souls, if you have not yet thus seen souls, you have seen nothing, felt nothing; and—and I say it with tears, a man may be a Priest for many years without having seen and loved these souls, because he is engaged in a ministry of routine where they do not appear; and therefore it is that I wish you to devote yourselves to the Catechism, because there you will see them. I should like that you also should be present at the opening of a Retreat, and on the eve of a first Communion, because there you will meet with these sweet souls, you will wonder at them, you will love them; you will see them there in all their purest beauty.

Thus, then, did this wonderful Wednesday appear to me for the first time.

Still this was only a first ray from the sacred fire; what really kindled it in me was that I was soon given the charge of the week-day Whitsuntide Catechism, and that for three months I had to occupy myself constantly with the immortal souls of these dear children, to see them closely and to study them; and the thought of these hidden diamonds, buried, and soiled, which must be found, polished, taken possession of, and restored to the light of God, inspired me with zeal for this beautiful work, and I pray God that He will never suffer this grace to be extinguished in me.

There were nearly four hundred children in this Catechism. M. l'Abbé Faillon, who was later the author of the life of M. Olier and of learned historical researches upon the mission of *S. Madeleine*, was the Head of it. My colleagues were, I think,

M. Jacquemet, now Bishop of Nantes, M. l'Abbé de Vèze, Vicar-General of the *Grand Aumônerie*, the Abbé Henry, Vicar-General of Moulins, and the Abbé des Garets, now Canon of Lyon. I mention all these, gentlemen, though perhaps you may not know them personally; but their names are still very dear to me; we made our first exploits together, and these are remembrances which we never lose.

They had all a great ardour for the salvation of these young children; their piety was fervent and their characters most lovable. I say nothing of their talent, it is a word which has hardly any place in the language of Gospel zeal or of Catechisms.

The best thing that I can say of us, and the most certain, is that we loved our children, and that they very soon felt it and loved us also. For myself, I so loved them, everything that was affectionate in my heart was so entirely taken up by them, that I have never loved anything so much; this religious affection, blessed by God, filled my heart then, and preserved me for ever from the danger of human affections. It was just at this time, in the presence of these young souls and their first Communion, that I felt definitely that I should become a Catechist. I may well say that if in my childhood I had loved no one on earth more than my Catechists, now, in my turn, having become a Catechist, I never loved my holiest and dearest friends more deeply than I loved my children of first Communion; and that, not a child here and there more lovable than the rest, but all, simply because they were the children of God, and I had the charge of their souls. And if the Catechism is what it ought to be, and if one has the least faith, or the least heart, this affection is certain to be felt.

In short, I experienced what Fénélon admirably says of the sacred fire which extinguishes all other fire. I was twenty-one years old; before the week-day Catechism I had often been tried by a certain feeling of sadness, a sort of uneasiness, a vague doubt about my vocation; after that I was strengthened and my mind entirely pacified. The week-day Catechism not only set my soul on fire for good, and

for the most sublime and the purest good, but, moreover, it gave to my heart and my mind a vigour which I had not known of.

The little papers of M. Teysseire had began to chase away rhetoric from my mind, the week-day Catechism completed the transformation. The literary aspirant disappeared, or at least put himself entirely at the service of the Catechist. It seems to me that at that time everything in me changed—heart, understanding, style; for everything I wrote and prepared for these children was filled with that flame which God had lighted in my heart; and strange to say, my mind had gained, and that in a few days, a freedom, an ardour, an animation which was altogether new. My colleagues remarked it themselves, and made me often speak to these dear children, on whom all the ardour of our zeal was concentrated.

Naturally, in this condition of my soul, I did not lack inspiration; it was ready and full of life, and I tell you this, my friend, with so much detail, chiefly to add that I did not trust to it, and that I worked and prepared with religious care, for what I felt to be so great a ministry; and when I read over again what I did then, the notes and fragments which I have still, I am amazed at them. It has happened to me since to appear in celebrated pulpits, and there to speak before a numerous audience. I do not know if I have ever attained to eloquence, but this I am certain of, that it has never been greater than at the Catechism. How many times I have been told so since by those I had prepared to make their first Communion! And it is my deep conviction, that the good one does there to oneself and to others is so great a good that no other work of zeal will ever surpass it.

The truth is, that in these Catechisms of first Communion there is an intercourse between souls which had no place on earth before the teaching of Christianity, nor even since to such a degree; and this at S. Sulpice, by reason of the youthfulness of the Catechists, this first pouring out of their zeal, this first love for souls, has something incomparable about it.

In this admirable seminary, of which Fénélon said that it was *a source of grace for the whole Church*, one is preparing

for sacerdotal ordination, one is full of the fervour of the love of God; all at once, if you have the happiness to be sent to the Catechism, you meet these young and lovable souls, these young faces still so pure, so bright, so trusting, so teachable and tender. You are sent to these children by God Himself; you give them what will never be better, the first-fruits and the youth of your heart. And the fruits are not slow in coming.

A child comes to the Catechism—such as I was myself, when I came there for the first time, in 1814—very frivolous, very impetuous, very far removed from the kingdom of God. Whoever he may be, he is at once conquered by an affection, the like of which is not to be met with anywhere on earth; it is almost irresistible.

And it has also an ineffable sweetness for the Catechists, for all this is carried on with these little twelve-year old children, whose reason, whose looks, whose smiles, whose heart, all suddenly wake up, so freshly, so graciously! Children and Catechists are attached to each other and towards God, irresistibly, by the very work which is done in them and by them, in the secrets of their hearts, in the eye of God, by the adorable action of His grace.

And it must not be supposed that these feelings only made an impression on our hearts; no, they also excited our minds, and gave an animation and a clearness to the understandings of our children, which helped them wonderfully to grasp the highest truths of the faith.

Among others I remember an instruction I gave them one day upon the Real Presence. I have it still; this Instruction was a great experience to me with regard to what I have just said. In composing it, I had made use of Bossuet's *Meditations on the Gospel.* Well, the Christian feeling, which opened the hearts of these children, at the same time developed and enlightened their minds to such a degree, that the elevation of Bossuet, the sublimity of the Eucharist, the mysterious greatness of the Real Presence, all seemed to be in harmony with the elevation, and intelligence and illumination in their own soul. The truth is that I never gave them an Instruction which impressed them more forcibly and profitably; and the

Analyses of these little boys and girls of twelve years old were admirably made.

Père Guyon, the celebrated missionary, preached at our Retreat; the Chapel was crowded; so many parents had asked leave to follow through the Retreat that we could only admit them by tickets; and we had nearly six hundred children to arrange in their places. It was an enormous affair. We all took part in it, and succeeded in ordering it well. But I remember that this grand placing made us all feel very serious and anxious. We were also very proud and very happy to have so great a preacher. On our own account, we promised ourselves great pleasure and great profit from hearing him; it seemed to us, and rightly, that it was a great opportunity for our own training in zeal and in apostolic preaching. For myself, I admired above all, and thenceforward tried to imitate, his simple, ardent, impetuous, and attractive manner. I do not know if I caught anything of it; but at least he helped to cure me of a certain declamatory manner, which my colleagues very justly found fault with.

But we were more happy still that we had him for our children. We did not doubt that he would convert them all, even those who gave us the greatest anxiety; and in truth it so came to pass.

Father Guyon preached for nearly two hours consecutively, and this was certainly excessive; any one but himself would have ruined the whole thing by it, and I think that even he was quite wrong. But still his preaching was so full of life, his action so animated, that through those two hours the children were motionless, and never for a moment took their eyes off him, or ceased to listen to his words.

I remember, among others, his sermon on the Last Judgment, in which at one moment he imagined God addressing a sinful child, at the hour of judgment, and saying to him: "Who are you? Whence do you come?—Lord, I come from the world. And who put you into the world?—Lord, it was Thou. And why did I put you into the world?—Lord, it was to know, to love, and to serve Thee, and thus to obtain eternal life.—Well, see, have you known Me? have you loved Me?

have you served Me?" And then began a most detailed, a most convicting examination, which ended with this terrible conclusion: "You have not known Me, you have not loved Me, you have not served Me, you will not have life eternal!"

I remember again two other of his sermons, one on death, in which, though speaking of very high things, he brought them within reach of the children's understanding; in particular this thought: "that death reigns in the world, and is the real sovereign of it." "This house," you say, "belongs to me; no, it belongs to death; in a few days death will send you away from it to give it to another," &c., &c.

Some time after the Retreat and the first Communion, having taken some of our children a pilgrimage to Issy, I was walking with them in the high part of the park, under the trees of the great avenue, called the *Quarantaine*. You know that from there one has a superb panorama, and can see the whole grandeur of Paris in one view. While these dear children were amusing themselves to their hearts' content, I saw one of them all on a sudden become quite thoughtful, while gazing on the grand view before us. I said, "Jules, what are you thinking of?"—"I was thinking," he said, "that, as the Preacher at the Retreat said, *all this belongs to death.*"

We ourselves laboured for their conversion with really extraordinary zeal throughout the whole of this Retreat. After each meeting, we kept back some of the naughtiest to talk to them kindly, and to urge them to conversion. These affectionate conversations, together with the preaching of Father Guyon, at last conquered even the hardest. We even took them, sometimes at once, if they asked it, to their parish Church, to their Confessors, whom we had asked beforehand to be kind enough to be near their Confessionals after each meeting. I remember in particular two children, whose conversion was really extraordinary. One, by name J. V., came on the Wednesday evening to tell me, with downcast eyes, but looking sweet and confiding, that he wished very much to have perfect Contrition before his first Communion, and asked me what he must do to obtain it; the other, P. G., who was J. V.'s friend, and had come with him, said, "And I, sir, I know that

I never could have perfect Contrition; but at least I should wish to be sure I had Attrition; tell me what I must do." I remember another, a youth of fourteen or fifteen, much older and very much bigger than all the rest, and exceedingly good-looking, but evidently a bad subject: the Retreat conquered him; his understanding and his heart being more developed, were more sensitive to the influence of grace, and he made a very fervent first Communion. I shall never forget the radiance of his countenance, when he came back into the Chapel, on Wednesday evening, after having received absolution; our Wednesday evening, as you may think, was a delicious evening.

I will only say that the glories of the next day filled us with joy; you can easily imagine it, and you know all the details.

Immediately afterwards came the Retreat for Confirmation, a sweet, peaceful and charming Retreat, in which our children had only their Catechists for Preachers, and where we were delighted to meet them, morning and evening, like a family, in our dear Chapel *des Allemands,* to give them familiar Instructions, and to tell them the most charming and the most edifying stories we could find, all with the view of preparing them for Confirmation.

The Confirmation was to take place on the following Thursday. On the Sunday between these two blessed Thursdays, the boys' Catechism festival was celebrated in the underground Chapel; on that day the Chapel was hung with beautiful blue and white silk, with gold fringe; the Altar was covered with flowers and lights; all the children came in their first Communion dress, with their white ribbons. Their own smiling faces, their joy on seeing all the preparations for the festival, and their fresh and simple delight, all this was the sweetest and the most splendid ornament of the Chapel.

I was appointed to preach the short sermon on that day. I did it with an ease which astonished myself, never having found the work easy; but my mind and my heart were so full of these dear children, and of the happiness of their first

Communion, that it all flowed out from my very soul. Then I remembered what M. Borderies had said to me, "You will see that you will speak to them without any trouble, when you have come to love them." The truth is, that even for unproductive minds, the love of souls is the great inspirer. I felt sure of it that day. Among other things, I told them a story which I owed to M. Teysseire's notes; and when I came to the last words of the story: "IT WAS ON A THURSDAY, DEAR CHILDREN," all my audience started, and their eyes filled with tears.

I must, however, say that the labours of the week-day Catechism, the continuous exercises of our two Retreats, together with so many efforts, so many pre-occupations and never-ceasing anxieties, ended by causing me such prostration from weariness, that during the Confirmation Retreat, I was sent away for some days into the country. I went there with regret on account of the children from whom I must be separated. I went early on Monday morning. I was a sub-deacon, and I well remember how, as I walked up a little hill above Pontoise, saying my breviary, the psalm *Dilexi*, which is the first in the Monday Vespers, specially charmed me, and gave my heart real consolation. And in particular, the words, which I applied to this rest, which the goodness of God had provided for me, after all the benefits which He had done to my soul in the midst of these dear children: "*Convertere, anima mea, in requiem tuam, quia Dominus benefecit tibi.*"

Notwithstanding the sadness of the separation, it was a pleasure to me to be in the country again, at that beautiful season, to see again the deep, fresh valley, the river, the verdant trees, to hear the bell from the Church which seemed as if it came out of the ground; and in the midst of all this which moved my heart, it was sweet to me also to talk about our children's Catechism, about this ministry, and all the great days which had just passed; there was so perfect a harmony between this Nature so smiling and peaceful, and the souls of the children, whom my thoughts were full of, that my heart was full of joy and sweetness.

But very soon, in spite of the charm of the country and my

need of it, I could not resist the longing to be again with our children; I returned to Paris at the end of two days, and on the Wednesday morning saw them again in their dear Chapel; on their side, and in their own way, they showed the pleasure it was to them to have me with them again; and so we happily passed the few days yet remaining for us to be together.

Finally the great day of the Confirmation, the Mass of Thanksgiving, the meeting for perseverance, brought to an end the week-day Catechism, but not without sorrow and tears. For myself, this week-day Catechism over was a great blank to me, and so also to my good colleagues. Our only pleasure was meeting each other in recreation, and talking of these children, and seeing those who were constantly coming to the Seminary to see us, on some excuse or other. Then we had the comfort of being all together again once every Sunday.

At last the Sunday Catechism itself was over, and on that last Sunday, the day of the distribution of prizes, I was appointed to speak to them for the last time, and for the text of my short sermon I took these words of the prophet, *Vos enutrivi cum gaudio, dimisi cum fletu et plorata; reducet autem vos mihi Dominus cum jucunditate:* "With joy did I nourish you, but sent you away with weeping and mourning . . . But God will give you to me again with joy and gladness for ever."

Such was my first Catechism year at S. Sulpice; you see, my friend, that it was full of blessings from God, and could not but leave a strong impression on my memory.

THIRD LETTER.

A LAST RECOLLECTION.

I.

The following year, my friend, I left the underground Chapel and the boys' Catechism with much regret; and I was sent to the large Perseverance Catechism for girls, of which M. Faillon was the Head. I was there with M. Dupuch, M. Petetot, M. Boniver, and M. de Hailandière.

In this admirable Catechism there were from four to five hundred young girls of all classes, who persevered in coming to it after their first Communion, that they might be more thoroughly instructed in our holy religion, sometimes remaining two, three, four, eight and ten years; in fact, generally till the time when they either went out into the world, and were married, or left it for the religious life.

It was no longer a question, then, of their conversion, as in the week-day Catechism; but of strengthening them in their good dispositions, of inspiring them with lively faith, with enlightened piety, and solid virtue; in short, as far as possible, to make them perfect Christians. It was certainly a work of very great interest, though calmer and less engrossing than the work of the boys' Catechism.

We turned our energies entirely to the Instructions and the homilies we had to deliver, and which now were very important. It is evident that such an audience, already so instructed, so cultivated by religion, and by that very culture rendered more susceptible, imposed on us great care in preparing our teachings and exhortations for them. For myself, this labour was of the greatest use to me, and completed my education as

a Catechist. I went further into the grounds of the truths I had to teach; and while, as befitted such a Catechist, I attended more to form and style, yet by the grace of God I did not lose simplicity nor the Catechistic feeling. I remember that I really worked very hard; I copied out and put in order all M. Teysseire's wonderful little papers which I had found; in Fénélon, in Bossuet, in Abbé Fleury, I studied all the precepts and examples which these eminent Catechists have left us. In my Instructions I endeavoured to introduce only the very best of what I found in my readings. I wrote out not only the Instructions which I was appointed myself to give at the Catechism, but sometimes also, if my theological studies allowed of it, those which my excellent colleagues gave, with much care and great success. I constantly took notes of the best of all they said. I was always observing and gathering up what seemed to me good and useful. I was delighted to see the little pile of treasures which I was trying to collect, grow larger and larger in my writing cabinet. What small merit I had was that I let nothing escape of all that was said and done around me. I have hardly ever had any other.

I profited even by the excellent *Diligences* or Analyses which our devout young *Persévérantes* made of all our Instructions. Our own zeal inspired the zeal of these children, and very soon the number of *Diligences* was tripled. The Head Catechist made a report of them every Sunday, founded on careful notes, written by the Catechist who had given the Instruction; and I must own in all humility, that these Analyses were often very superior to the Instructions we had given. I copied out several at the time, and sometimes read them over again now, and they are really wonderful.

But what charmed me yet more in the Catechism of Perseverance were the monthly Communions and the festivals.

These monthly Communions, which were wonderfully devout, were a most touching sight, with this multitude of young people, models of zeal and fervour, and also of charity for the poor; they were really heavenly mornings.

The fête was brilliant in the evening. The solemnity began by the recitation of the *Billets* by the oldest members of Per-

severance. They were then explained either by a Vicar-General or some other ecclesiastic of considerable importance; generally, a Bishop presided at the meeting; then, after Vespers, one of the Catechists preached. I remember preaching with great pleasure the sermon for the feast of the Immaculate Conception. The whole was concluded by some words from the Bishop, by a solemn *Salut*, and by a grand distribution of pictures and rewards to the most deserving.

The Retreat, which was held on the Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday before Lent, was a great time. Nothing was more touching than to see all these young girls freely choosing the joys of the Catechism before all the worldly fêtes and diversions; never, throughout the whole course of the year, was the Chapel better filled; but I own that on these days we did everything in our power to make the Catechism pleasant. The *Persévérantes* of that time have not, I am sure, forgotten the Conferences then held between the Abbé de Moligny and his adversary. It was most remarkable to see the willingness both of mind and heart with which these pious children turned suddenly from the most lively sights of Christian gaiety to the deepest attention and most fervent prayer.

I know not how better to describe my recollection of this Catechism of Perseverance than by saying that it was one of the greatest schools of piety and wisdom that I have ever seen; souls were dealt with in every way in the best manner possible, and the power which religion there exercised over them was truly admirable.

And yet, my dear friend, this Catechism is not my strongest recollection of that second year.

II.

I GREATLY desired to be Head Catechist of the week-day Whitsuntide Catechism, but I dared not show anything of this feeling to my superiors; I was even alarmed at having the desire in my heart; I would not for anything in the world have intruded myself, even by my zealous desires, into so great a ministry.

Still I was nominated to it, and this charge which I had wished for, and yet feared the wish, on conscientious grounds, very soon showed me that my fears were wiser than my wishes. However that may be, this Catechism had a very great deal to do with the whole future of my ministry, certainly it was the greatest benefit I received from my education at S. Sulpice, and for my whole sacerdotal life it was a most important and powerful revelation.

Till then, I had only been second in the work of the Catechisms; the pastoral charge had not weighed heavily nor chiefly upon myself; I had only known the happy work of it, and its joys. In becoming Head I was to learn the pain. I had known the sweetness of the love of souls, but in accepting the weight of the responsibility, I was to be initiated into the highest lesson of the sacred ministry, and to know its sorrows. No doubt there were still immense consolations to be found in it; but mixed with so much anxiety and pain, that my soul scarcely felt the comforts; in short, the crown of thorns began to be placed on my brow, never again to leave it. The thorns may have changed their form and nature; but it is always the crown of thorns; and to this day it is there still.

It was an extraordinary feeling. The thought that all these little children were confided to me; that I, I myself, was commissioned to convert them, to save them, to win them to God, to make them good and happy, to prepare them for their first Communion, for that great day!—the thought filled me with joy but at the same time with indescribable fear.

When I reflected on these sweet souls, these immortal souls, bought with the price of the blood of Jesus Christ, when I considered this great power which was given me over them, a power and an influence for life or eternal death, my fear amounted almost to terror.

In fact, there is nothing greater, I will almost say, nothing more terrible; in a humble Catechism there is the whole apostolic ministry. There must be the apostolic fire, perfect devotion, forgetfulness of self, patience, endurance, self-denial; in short there, as everywhere and always, the ministry of souls is always laborious and sorrowful; but, my friend, to encourage

you, and to keep to the truth, it must be added, that this Ministry is, in the Catechism, exercised under really good conditions; sometimes they are most favourable and delightful; and all one's best feelings come to one's aid.

The transformation of these young children is so beautiful, so touching a work, there is such a union of quite ineffable comforts and cares, that one feels by turns strengthened, both by sorrow and joy.

The truth is, that I have never begun a week-day Catechism without feeling intense pleasure and yet an undefined pain, without feeling in the highest degree my position as Priest and Pastor of souls. The Monday and Tuesday which precede Ash-Wednesday are always days of deep emotion to me, and yet it is thirty years ago since, on those days which preceded the opening of the week-day Catechism, we arranged the placing of the children who were to be admitted, and made out the list. . . . My soul was then entirely engrossed with a feeling of peculiar sweetness and earnestness.

These children—we were now to be able to talk to them about God with open hearts, unreservedly, tell them everything; reveal to them our own soul, ask them also for theirs; in short, astonish them, show them what a Catechism is! . . .

Yes, astonish them; give them a great surprise which shall save them; the surprise of finding in their Catechists a devotion, an affection, a zeal, efforts for their salvation, a tenderness of heart for their souls, of which no other tenderness they have ever met with on earth could have given them an idea.

Even the Sunday Catechism did not give them an idea of it. In fact, the Sunday Catechism, though a religious thing, and useful, very useful, is not that affair of life or death which belongs to the week-day Catechism. It is in this that we must get hold of the children, carry them away, move them, transform them; teach them how to live and how to die, to die to sin, and to live in Jesus Christ, to become, in short, serious and sincere and persevering Christians.

And this was accomplished by a series of Instructions, of persuasion, of Admonitions, of zealous efforts, of examples, of kindness, of promises, and of threats; and all this, if its

influence over the children were almost irresistible, was an excessive labour for the Head Catechist, and both body and soul were exhausted.

The two months and a half, during which the week-day Whitsuntide Catechism lasted, were therefore two months of extreme labour. There were a great many children, nearly four hundred; two hundred girls and two hundred boys. To know them all, to instruct them thoroughly in their religion, to teach them how to amend their faults, to confess rightly, to pray well, and to inspire them, together with repentance for their faults, with some beginning of love to God, all this filled my thoughts continually. I was admirably seconded by those of my friends who were engaged with me in this Catechism. But I, who in previous Catechisms had been satisfied with everything, now, by reason of the burden which weighed on my own shoulders, and the immense responsibility of all these children committed to my charge, I never thought that what we did was good enough. It seemed to me that our Instructions were not forcible enough, my Admonitions not impressive enough. I was yet more exacting in regard to myself than with regard to my colleagues; I desired to see with my own eyes all these children converted, without delay, without exception. The slowness of some, the resistance of others, the frivolity of the younger ones, all this was distressing to me. But I was wrong in everything. I did not trust enough to the grace of God, I was too forgetful that the conversion of souls cannot generally be either instantaneous or violent.

Still it was not altogether without reason that I was terrified, because in reality I found myself face to face with these children in this very serious alternative; to admit them or to send them away. To admit them, if they were not fit for it, was terrible and impossible; to send them away was a very sad line to take; the protestations of the parents, the tears of the children—my heart was torn by these dismissals; I could not resolve upon them; I felt in my heart that these children had not been entrusted to me that they should be sent away from the Catechism, but that I should

make them better and convert them. I must say that I never did send them away till after having done everything in the world to amend them, and thus to fulfil the duty which was on my conscience, but that did not comfort me. I remember quoting, when I was expressing my sorrow, the words of S. Bernard: "Is a mother comforted for the death of her child, because she has spared nothing for his recovery?" And such was the grace of God in this incomparable ministry, that when I said these words, I, though I was but twenty-two, was moved as a mother might be; and it seems to me that I really had in my soul something of a mother's feeling for these children.

Sometimes the entreaties made to me were most earnest and pressing, I could hardly resist them. I remember among others a poor old woman of seventy. I had felt obliged to send away her granddaughter; she had neither father nor mother, and I felt great pity for her sad condition, but she was absolutely unfit to make her first Communion. Her poor grandmother came to me, begging and praying; finally she threw herself at my feet in the Seminary parlour, and declared she would not rise till I had granted her the first Communion for her grandchild. It went to my heart to see and to hear her, I really did not know what would be the end of it.

In these entreaties there was sometimes a comic element in the midst of the sadness; but I was only alive to the sadness. Thus one day a poor gardener, who had adopted his little niece, also an orphan, came all in tears with her to beg me to keep her on at the Catechism, and he went on for more than an hour, for the entreaties of these good people sometimes lasted a very long time; and I could not succeed in persuading them that it would be better to wait for another year. I had, however, found out one way of turning aside these painful entreaties, and this was to speak to the children themselves, and say to them, "You see, my child, what trouble you are giving to your parents. If you had followed their advice and ours, you would not be causing them this grief."

I tried it with this good gardener, who then, turning to his

niece, said to her in a doleful voice, "It is very true; Monsieur is quite right, what trouble you do give us! Well then, Monsieur, we must wait another year for her to make her first Communion;" and then he added, pointing to the child who had gone away crying into a corner of the room, "All the same, it is very vexing, Monsieur; she has been fasting for six weeks, and now that is all thrown away for this year!"

Sometimes I had also to listen to men of the world, who were yet more difficult to deal with, and did not understand things so well as the poorer people. It was a time when impiety reigned, and when many sent their children to be prepared for the first Communion without themselves knowing what it was all about. The language of Christianity was absolutely unknown to them, and when they tried to speak it, nothing could be more curious. Among others I remember one father, whose son I had not been able to admit; he came with the boy's school-master. He took the thing quietly enough, but the father, who was an employé in the Ministry, took a somewhat haughtier tone, but when he saw that I was quite calm and not to be moved, he felt he must moderate his behaviour, and to show me that he was not a man altogether without religion, he said with a sigh and with a solemn voice, "But indeed, Monsieur, I have always told him he *must make his Sacrament* well."

You will understand, my dear friend, that all these things were extremely painful to me. I became a little more accustomed to them afterwards, but at the time they made me very unhappy. I am bound to say, however, that the great majority of these children were exceedingly well disposed for their first Communion.

I remember some children in particular with whom we were quite satisfied: Guillaume G—— de C——, he was my *intendant;* Clémentine Nicolas, a pupil of excellent Mademoiselle Cologne, she also was *intendante;* Albert de la Ferronnays, and a great number of others whom I could mention. But yet all these children, even the best, needed to be touched, changed, converted.

At every meeting of the Catechism some were converted,

and gradually nearly all were much changed for the better. The meeting at which we consecrated them to the Blessed Virgin was very sweet and very effective. At the first Act of Contrition which was to prepare them for their general Confession, Père Martin, the learned and eloquent theologian of the Company of Jesus, preached, and very well. Then came the Retreat, which was very beautiful. Our preacher was M. Levasseur, now Superior-General of the *Pères de la Miséricorde*. His preaching was very forcible, perfectly sound in its reasonings, and full of the illumination of faith. I told the children the story of S. Augustine's conversion, which was charming to them and to myself. I related to them also the story of Adèle and Théodore, and on Wednesday a child's dream on the eve of his first Communion, which I had found among M. Teysseire's papers.

The hymn which made the most impression on them, during these retreats, was, "*Hélas! quelle douleur!*" they sang it delightfully. I made them sing it on Monday and Tuesday evening, before telling them my stories; their hearts were saddened by the hymn, and led on to deep contrition; and then came the stories, which rested and comforted them. Passing thus alternately through these various emotions, all their souls were softened, conquered, and finally they yielded themselves up to the grace of God.

Our Wednesday evening was delicious; a little incident which happened gave an unexpected charm to this meeting. These children, reconciled to the good God, were all full of that joy of heart and radiance of happiness of which I have already spoken. And I gave out, as perfectly in harmony with their feelings, the last verses of the hymn, "*Hélas! quelle douleur!*" It is a very tearful hymn, but the two last verses are full of joy and hope.[1] The children had not heard rightly, and began to sing the first verse, "*Hélas! quelle douleur!*" I stopped them at once. "No, no," I said, "my children: '*Non, non, c'est une*

[1] "Non, non, c'est une erreur?
Dans mon malheur,
Hélas! je m'oublie!
Non, non, c'est une erreur!
Dans mon malheur,

erreur.' It is no longer sorrow which now fills your hearts, it is joy, because you are reconciled to our Saviour, and to-morrow you will receive the bread of the blessed, the heavenly manna: '*ce pain des heureux, cette manne céleste.*' Sing then the beautiful verses which end your hymn."

The children, moved and impressed, sung these two verses with wonderful ardour and feeling. Their whole soul was in their singing. They even sang over again the last verse;

"Jésus, manne des Cieux!"

and many of the children, as they sang, wept with emotion and joy.

The fervent and penitent devotion of Guillaume G. de C—— was a great comfort to us, and tended to the great edification of the whole Catechism. His notes of Retreat were exceedingly good, and I keep the book still as a memento of this excellent boy, who died three years after he had made his first Communion.

I have also Clementine N.'s note-book. This pious child also died two years afterwards, and it might truly be said, that God gave her a fore-knowledge of her early death, at her first Communion.

I will not tell you again about the day or the ceremonies of the first Communion. I will only say that I was much moved when I saw these dear children draw near to the holy Table; and that I thanked God for having chosen me to prepare them for this great day.

The remembrance of the happiness I felt, in my childhood, when I heard M. Menjaud making the Act of Consecration to the Blessed Virgin, determined me to do it myself, which I did, to my great consolation.

Still, notwithstanding the happiness of seeing the piety of all these dear children, and hearing their sweet hymns, the feeling which was really at the bottom of my heart, and

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"Je trouve un Sauveur!
Il m'entend," &c.

"Jésus, manne des Cieux!
Pain des heureux,
Mon cœur te réclame!" &c.

dominating everything, was a sort of austere consciousness of the supreme importance of this first Communion, of this question of eternal life or death which was perhaps to be decided for these dear children that very day, and of the burden of responsibility which the charge of their souls laid upon me; it was ever in my heart like a dart, and in my happiest moments weighed upon me with a certain sadness and anxiety.

Then came the eight days of Retreat for the Confirmation, which were calmer days, and truly delightful. And then came the last day, the last of these dear and devout meetings. We must part; I said good-bye to them all. I was very much affected. Every one in the Chapel was in tears, the children and even the parents. The parents had become deeply attached to us, seeing our love and devotion for their children.

After the last prayer, which I said in their name, on my knees at the foot of the Altar, ending with the *Souvenez-vous*, which they so loved, I got up and gave the signal for departure; but not one of them rose, they all remained in their places. I mastered my emotion, and said in a firm voice, "*Let us go, my children, we must part. We shall meet again in Heaven . . . . and even again at the Catechism.*" But it was all in vain; the Catechists had to go from seat to seat and lead them away, comforting them and talking kindly to them. There was one of them, Albert de la Ferronnays, who could not make up his mind to go. The Abbé Duc de Rohan, who was present, and was a friend of his family, was obliged to come and carry him away.

I was to see this dear child again, never to forget him; and I will tell you presently of an incident about this dear soul, now, I hope, in heaven, the memory of which will never leave me as long as I live.

At length they had all left the Chapel; we went out the last, feeling very sorrowful.

The next day, urged by some longing in my heart, I went back to the empty Chapel; I looked at the place, and the seats, where they had been; I can still feel the sensation of my heart at seeing them no longer there. Though they had given me so much trouble, yet, or perhaps for that very reason, they

had taken a firm hold on my heart. I remained sitting for some time in the sanctuary, going over to myself all my recollections of this Chapel, from the day when I came there for the first time, in my childhood, where I had been so beloved by my Catechists, and where I had found the grace of God, up to this time, when, having in my turn become a Catechist and Pastor, and called on to give to others all those good things which my own heart had received, I also had given these children all the affection, all the devotion of my soul, and as it were all the joys and all the sorrows of the apostolic life. And then I retired, thanking God, and went to kneel for a few moments before the Blessed Sacrament, opposite the high Altar of S. Sulpice, commending the perseverance of these dear children to the goodness of our Lord, saying to Him: "*Non rogo ut tollas eos à mundo, sed ut serves eos à malo.*"

But I was not the only one brought there by the remembrance of the first Communion.

Having ended my prayer, I was about to retire, when as I rose I saw, a few paces in front of me, a child on his knees, prostrate in adoration and most earnest prayer, his eyes fixed on the tabernacle, to which he was immediately opposite. I had been a little on one side; it was Albert de la Ferronnays. I remained there, watching him with much emotion, and waiting till he had ended. I waited for half an hour while he was still praying. I was obliged to go out on some business, and I went without venturing to interrupt him. I took my walk and came in again an hour afterwards; he was still in adoration, in the same attitude, his hands clasped, and his eyes fixed on the tabernacle. I waited there nearly half an hour longer. At last he went out; the angelic child had been there more than two hours. I saw him, pressed his hand, made the sign of the Cross on his forehead, and said adieu to him once again. He soon left France with his parents, and I never saw him afterwards, till the time of his death, when he asked me to bring him his last Communion. Fifteen years had elapsed since his first. He had always remained faithful. A man of the tenderest heart and liveliest feelings, he conquered all, and only gave them to God, and to one human being, angelic as

himself, whom he met on his travels and married in Italy. She did not then belong to the Catholic Church, but brought and persuaded by the example and affection of her pious husband, and perhaps by grief, she made her first Catholic Communion at the side of her husband's death-bed, who thus had the supreme and ineffable joy of making his last Communion in company with her whom he loved best on earth. Respect forbids me to say more of them here; but the virtues of these two souls are known now, thanks to the *Récits*, which every one has read, and those who knew them, and will never forget them, can never think of them but as it were surrounded by an aureole, and as two angels, who were really like an apparition of heavenly beauty upon earth.

III.

But, my dear friend, I must bring these long accounts to an end, and sum up all.

And now, what is to be concluded from all that I have said? Only one great thing, which includes all; to know that the ministry of Catechising, as our Lord has instituted it, is above all things a ministry of zeal and love; to Catechists more than any other are those words of the Master spoken: *Amas Me? Pasce agnos Meos: "Lovest thou Me? Feed My lambs."*

Yes, before all things, what is wanted here, is the love of God and of souls: without that love, nothing is possible.

For in fact, what has to be done in a Catechism? A sublime revelation has to be given, and an initiation. Well, the true revealer, as the Apostle S. John says, is Love. It teaches all things: *Docet omnia.*

It is not a dry science which we have to give to these children; we must open their hearts to all that is good, true, pure, tender, pious; we must make them know and love the supreme goodness, beauty, and truth of God; and for this, we must reach their soul, we must reach their heart.

It is a delicate work! for though they give their heart readily, quite as readily do they withhold it.

Children receive the holy flame while in their mothers' arms, and at the Catechism; but always from the love which is felt for them. If there is no love for them, nothing is revealed to them.

Therefore, my dear friend, this school in which they are to learn to love our Lord must be made dear and attractive to them; they must be made to love this Catechism, to be attached to it by the charm they find in it, by the happiness which they there enjoy.

In one word, they must be made happy there; yes, happy by having their hearts opened; happy by the hymns they are given to sing, by the rewards they are given, by the beautiful and touching stories they are told, by the splendid and charming festivals which are held in their Chapel; by, in short, every means which show children that you love them; happy also and above all by the piety with which they will be inspired, by the love of God, whose goodness there experienced will leave an indelible remembrance.

In short, they must be made to feel that the happiest time of their childhood was the time when they went to the Catechism, where they made their first Communion, and where they loved God; and that the purest joys of their life have come from religion.

And now, is it thus that the Catechism is generally understood and carried on?

Do we love childhood? In spite of its weaknesses, do we see that radiance in it which charmed our Lord? Do we feel our soul moved in presence of these young souls? Are we happy to devote ourselves to them? Do we put our heart and soul into it? Are we ready to do everything, to suffer everything, to try everything, to invent everything to win these children, to touch them, to transform them, to lift them up gradually to divine things, to attach them to religion, to Jesus Christ, to Heaven? In a word, do we feel anything of the love of our Lord for these little ones, *Parvulos*, whose angels, He said, always see the face of God in heaven? Do we know that in the Catechism we are fulfilling precisely towards them an angelic ministry?

Or rather, too often, does not the wearisome side of this great ministry, its difficulties, its labours, its apparent humbleness, do not they hide from our eyes its honour and happiness? And therefore, is it not undertaken with a weak faith, a cold heart, faltering words, and failing zeal?

No, I say it with grief, in far too many Catechisms, even in those which deserve the name, hardly anything is done to win these dear souls to God.

The children are not loved, and therefore are not taught to love.

No recourse is had to the many ways and means of influence which have so much charm and so much power over these fresh young souls, with their overflowing and lively natures.

A dry, hard, and often unintelligible Instruction is given to them; a language is spoken to them which they do not understand; they are transported into a world which is altogether strange to them, because they have not been properly led into it; the Catechism is often held even in a porch, or the dark end of a Church. There is no other school which has not its class-room, its fire, its own place. It is only the school of Jesus Christ which has neither fire nor place of its own; and the sole result of Catechisms thus conducted, is an invincible disgust for religion and the things of God.

In our religion we have everything which is most lovable; a heavenly Father, a Son of God who is our Saviour, a Spirit who is our Comforter and Sanctifier, a Virgin Mother, Saints, Angels, Heaven! and yet no one knows how to bring the tender and affectionate hearts of children to love all this!

My dear friend, forgive me these sad words; they will never apply to you, I am sure; you will be a Catechist after God's heart, you will have fire and zeal; and if these letters may have contributed in any measure to kindle this sacred devotion in your heart, and in the heart of other Priests, oh! I shall thank God with an overflowing heart for having inspired me with the thought of writing them.

But no; Thou alone, O my God, canst make this sublime and

needful work of the Catechism to be understood! Thou alone canst inspire the love for it, Thou alone canst revive it amongst us! Thou alone, O my God, by Thy Spirit of love and zeal shed abroad in our hearts! *Emitte spiritum tuum, et creabuntur, et renovabis faciem terræ!*

THE END.

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APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.

(TO BOOK III.)

Scheme of Instructions for the Week-Day Catechism.[1]

1. Of Grace.

Part 1.—What is grace?

Part 2.—How many kinds of grace are there?

2. Of Actual Grace.

Part 1.—Is grace necessary to us?

Part 2.—What can we do by the help of grace?

Part 3.—Can we resist grace?

3. Of Prayer.

Part 1.—What is prayer?

Part 2.—Is prayer necessary for us?

Part 3.—What is the power of prayer?

Part 4.—How must we pray?

4. Of the Blessed Virgin.

Part 1.—Power of the Blessed Virgin.

Part 2.—Goodness of the Blessed Virgin.

5. Upon Sin.

Part 1.—What is sin?

Part 2.—What is original sin?

6. Actual Sin.

Part 1.—What is actual sin?

Part 2.—In how many ways do we commit it?

Part 3.—How are the different kinds of actual sins distinguished?

7. Of the Sacraments in General.

Part 1.—What is a Sacrament?

Part 2.—How do the Sacraments sanctify us?

8. Baptism.

Part 1. What is baptism?

Part 2. Is baptism necessary to salvation?

Part 3. What is promised on receiving baptism?

9. Of the Sacrament of Penitence.

Part 1.—What is penitence?

Part 2.—Is the sacrament of penitence very necessary?

Part 3. When do we receive the sacrament of penitence (difference between Benediction and Absolution)?

10. Of Contrition.

Part 1.—What is contrition?

Part 2.—What are the qualities of contrition?

[1] For the details and expansion of each instruction, see the Schemes for the Catechism of Perseverance. App. II.

11. Of Contrition.

Part 1.—How many sorts of contrition are there?

Part 2.—Is contrition necessary?

Part 3.—How can we know that we have contrition?

12. On the Means for Obtaining Contrition.

Part 1.—What must we do to obtain contrition?

Part 2.—When must we excite ourselves to contrition?

Part 3.—What are the most suitable motives for exciting contrition?

13. Of Confession.

Part 1.—What is confession?

Part 2.—Is confession necessary?

Part 3.—Must we confess all our sins?

Part 4.—What must we do if we have unhappily concealed a mortal sin in confession?

14. Of Satisfaction.

Part 1.—What is satisfaction?

Part 2.—Are we obliged to make satisfaction to God after having received absolution for our sins?

Part 3.—How do we make satisfaction to God?

15. Of Absolution.

Part 1.—What is absolution?

Part 2.—What are the effects of absolution?

Part 3.—How ought we to receive absolution?

16. Of the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Part 1.—Doctrine of the Church concerning the Holy Eucharist.

Part 2.—Proofs of the real presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

17. Of the Sacrifice of the Mass.

Part 1.—What is the Mass?

Part 2.—How does the sacrifice of the Mass represent and continue the Sacrifice of the Cross?

18. Purposes of the Sacrifice.

Part 1.—The Church offers to God the sacrifice of the Mass as an act of worship to Him.

Part 2.—The Church offers to God the sacrifice of the Mass to thank Him for His benefits.

Part 3.—The Church offers to God the sacrifice of the Mass to ask of Him graces.

Part 4.—The Church offers to God the sacrifice of the Mass to obtain the forgiveness of sins.

19. Explanation of the Prayers and Ceremonies of the Mass.

Part 1.—Preparation for the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

Part 2.—Sacrifice properly so called.

Part 3.—Acts of thanksgiving.

20. Of Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

Part 1.—Motives for our devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

Part 2.—Practice of this devotion.

21. Of a Lukewarm Communion and of a Fervent Communion.

Part 1.—Of lukewarm communion.

Part 2.—Of fervent communion.

22. Of Sacrilegious Communion.

Part 1.—What is the sin of sacrilegious communion?

Part 2.—What is the grievousness of a sacrilegious communion?

Part 3.—Who are in danger of making a first communion sacrilegiously?

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1. Of the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Part 1.—What is Confirmation?
Part 2.—What are the effects of Confirmation?
Part 3.—What is its necessity?

2. Of the Holy Spirit.

Part 1.—Who is the Holy Spirit?
Part 2.—What are the works and operations of the Holy Spirit?

3. Of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Part 1. — Wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and counsel.
Part 2.—Godliness, strength, and holy fear.

4. Of the Ceremonies of Confirmation.

Part 1.—Who administers Confirmation?
Part 2.—What are the principal ceremonies in Confirmation?

APPENDIX II.

(TO BOOK V.)

SCHEMES OF INSTRUCTIONS.

FIRST YEAR OF THE COURSE.—DOGMA.

I. Existence of God.

1. Those who cannot believe that there is one God, the Creator; who suppose the world came of itself, can only be madmen, &c., &c.—Proofs from reason.

2. Also, all the nations of the world, without exception, have so believed.—Proofs from authority.

II. Perfections of God.

God is 1. a Spirit; 2. eternal; 3. self-sustained; 4. unchangeable; 5. infinite; 6. without limits; 7. present everywhere; 8. He sees everything; 9. He can do everything; 10. He has created all things.

III. Providence.

God, having created all things, *governs them all with wisdom, goodness, power, justice.*

1. Providence of God in the physical world. 2. Providence of God in the moral world.

IV. Necessity of Religion for man.

1. What is Religion? 2. Is it necessary to have Religion? What are we to think of respectable men, but without Religion?

V. Indifference as to choice of Religion.

This indifference is:

1. A crime. 2. Folly.

Therefore a man should apply himself to know which is the one true Religion, by which *God* wills to be honoured, loved, served.

We are going to set ourselves to know it thoroughly, studying first its beautiful and divine *history.*

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

I. Creation.

1. Of Angels; 2. of the world; 3. of man.

II. State of man after Creation.

1. State of innocence and happiness; 2. State of sin and misery.

General view.—The Christian religion before Jesus Christ, *i.e.* Jesus Christ promised, prefigured, announced, expected, to raise again man who had fallen through sin from the happy state in which he was created.

III. State of Religion under the Patriarchs.

1. Of the Patriarchs in general.—Who were the Patriarchs? Their noble, simple, and pure manners.—Religion: One God alone.—Sacrifices looked forward to, typified, announced Jesus Christ.

2. The most celebrated Patriarchs.—Adam.—Abel, type of Jesus Christ.—Cain, type of the Jews.—The children of God and the children of men.—Noah.—The deluge.—Abraham, father of God's people.—Promises of Jesus Christ.—Isaac, His type.—Joseph, His type.—Jacob in dying salutes Him.

IV. State of Religion under Moses.

1. The people of Israel, multiplied, oppressed, enslaved, are delivered by Moses.—Miracles of Moses.

2. The holy people wander forty years in the desert.—Sinai and the Law.—Manna.—The serpent of brass.—Moses, historian, law-giver, prophet.—Joshua (type of Jesus Christ) brings the people into the Promised Land.—Prophecy of Balaam.

V. State of Religion under the Kings and the Prophets.

1. After the Judges, Kings; Saul, David, Solomon.—The Jews' temple and their glory.—Rehoboam.—The rebellious tribes. — Kingdom of Israel destroyed. — Jehoshaphat, Josiah, Hezekiah.

2. The Prophets. What were prophets? David, Isaiah, Elijah, Elisha.—Jesus Christ announced much more clearly.

VI. State of Religion during the Captivity and the Return.

1. The Captivity. — Crimes.—Threatenings. — Jeremiah. — Vengeance.—Consolations.—Daniel, his prophecies.

2. The Return.— Cyrus.— Temple rebuilt.— Haggai. — Imperfect sacrifices. — Zechariah. — Malachi. —Prophecies sealed up.

VII. State of the world in the year 4000.

1. State of the Gentiles.—Corruption, profound moral disorder.—Philosophers unable to supply a remedy for the evil. Then, come, expected Saviour.—Rumours spread; He is expected. . . . Universal peace. . . Everything ready. . .

2. State of the Jews.—Prophecy is silent. . . Expecting.—Various sects: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Herodians.—Faithful Jews. . . . Judea falls.—Romans. . . . Herod. . . Jesus Christ appears.

VIII. Jesus Christ.

1.—Hidden life.

1. Annunciation. — Incarnation. — Visitation. — Birth. — Magi.—Circumcision and Presentation.—Flight into Egypt. — Return to Nazareth.

2. The Child Jesus in the temple at Jerusalem.—Hidden and laborious life at Nazareth.—S. John the Baptist.—Jesus Christ is baptized. —Heaven opens.—His public life begins.

IX. Jesus Christ.

2.—Public life.

1. Preaching. — Simplicity. — Unction.—Authority.
2. Miracles of power and of mercy.
3. Virtues. — Humility. — Self-denial. — Poverty. — Gentleness.— Patience. — Kindness. — Zeal. — Prayer. — Friendship. — Love of country. — Obedience. — Mortification.—Silence.—Divine purity.

X. Jesus Christ.

3.—Suffering life.

1. The enemies of Jesus Christ. —Who ?—Why ?—Persecutions.
2. The Passion.—He is betrayed. — Abandoned. — Led away. — Loaded with outrages and blows.— Judged.—Condemned. — Crucified. — Buried. — Fulfilment of Prophecies.

XI. Jesus Christ.

4.—Glorious life.

1. The Resurrection proved, without going into evidence, by the simple and fresh Gospel narrative, with some reflections.—2. The Ascension.—Our Lord, after His resurrection, remained forty days with His Apostles; He instructs them, and completes the foundation of His Church.—Strengthens Peter.— Gives to them all power.—Sends them.—Promises them the Holy Spirit.—Last words.—He goes up to heaven.

TRIUMPHS OF THE CHURCH.

XII. Triumph of the Church over the whole world by the propagation of the Christian Religion.

1.—Sketch of the Propagation.

1. Great and rapid propagation. —Descent of the Holy Spirit.— S. Peter.—S. Paul.—The Apostles divide the world between them.— S. Peter at Antioch, at Rome.— S. Paul in Asia, in Greece, in Italy, everywhere.—Witness of S. Irenæus. —Of Tertullian.—The Jews had rejected the Gospel.—With Rome, the whole world falls at the feet of Jesus Christ.—2. *Without human means.*—Neither learning, nor eloquence, nor riches, nor power.— Corinth.—Athens.—3. *In spite of all obstacles.*—Inveterate errors.— Incomprehensible mysteries.—Passions. — Austere morality. —The pagan priests.—The philosophers, the Emperors: Nero, the others.— Terrible persecutions.—No matter, everything gives way, and finally Constantine.

XIII. Triumph of the Church over the vices of paganism, by the fervour of the early Christians.

1. *Christians in the world.*— Church of Jerusalem.—Baptism.— Prayers. — Holy Scriptures. — Labour. — Fasts and festivals. — Modesty and seriousness of Christians.—Care of the poor, of travellers, of the sick.—Holy widows, S. Paula, S. Marcella.—Love, unity among Christians. — Meeting of Christians: first in houses, then in the catacombs, then in churches. —Holy pontiffs presided, S. John Chrysostom, S. Cyprian.—Respect for the Bishops.—Public penitence. S. Ambrose and Theodosius.—S. Helena.—Pulcheria.

2. *Christians in solitude.*— Motives which led them to it.— Celebrated Solitaries. — S. Paul, S. Anthony, S. Pacomius, S. Hilarion, S. Arsenius. — The Thebaïd. . . . Monks, Hermits,

Anchorites. . . . What was their life? Labour, prayer, obedience, silence, poverty, chastity.

XIV. Triumphs of the Church over persecutions, by the Constancy of Martyrs.

1. Sketch of the persecutions.

1. General persecution: — 300 years, no one spared—no age; no sex; no condition of life.—Eleven millions.—2. Terrible deaths: 30 Popes martyred.

2. By what power the martyrs were sustained.

1. Not *fanaticism;* they were attesting a fact.—2. Not *prejudice;* Justin and Tertullian: "We were not born Christians."—3. Not *the hatred of tyrants:* Theban Legion, Thundering Legion.—Julian's army. —S. Sebastian, S. Lawrence, S. Victor, S. Vincent.—Divine constancy.—Strength and help evidently Divine.

XV. Triumph of the Church over the Jews by the ruin of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jewish nation.

1. Prophecies of Moses, of Isaiah, of Daniel, of Jesus Christ.—2. Fulfilment of the prophecies which announced the ruin of Jerusalem. Tell the circumstances of it.—3. Fulfilment of the prophecies which announced the ruin of the Jews, even in our own days.—Julian the Apostate.

XVI. Triumph of the Church over Heresies by its Councils and its Doctors.

Religion at last on the throne. —Peace.—But new and more cruel struggles.—It is rent by its own children. — Fresh triumphs. 1. Great Heresies.—2. Great Doctors. 3. Great Councils.—The Church the pillar and ground of truth.

XVII. Conversion and Civilisation of barbarous people by the Church.

1. Invasion of the barbarians.—Fall of the Roman Empire.—New races.—Islamism.—2. Nations converted and civilised by great bishops, by monks, by missionaries. —Crusades.

XVIII. Triumph of the Church over the schism of the Greeks and the heresy of Protestants.

1. *Over the Greek schism.*—Causes of the schism. — Photius, his pride.—Michael Cerularius. He is deposed.—The Greeks try several times to re-unite themselves, at Lyons, at Florence, but in vain.—Mahomet crushes them.

2. *Over Protestant heresy.*—Its causes. — Luther and Calvin.—Henry VIII.—Progress.—Violence. —Society of Jesus. — S. Francis Xavier converts India.—Japan.—China. — Both the Americas.—Council of Trent.—Conversion of Henri IV.—Admirable saints.—S. Charles Borromeo. — S. Theresa.—S. François de Sales.—S. Vincent de Paul.—Divisions of Protestantism; tendency to merge into rationalism.

XIX. Triumph of the Church over impiety. — A more terrible combat.

1. Sketch of the struggle.

Impiety attacked the Church, and brought together against her: 1. All efforts of talent; 2. All opposed passions, and chiefly corruption and pride; 3. Violence and the sword.

2. Triumph of the Church.

1. *Over talent.*—New Apologists. —The blasphemers themselves become ridiculous, and are covered with shame.—Their avowals.—2. *Over the passions.*—Holy bishops.—Greater regularity in the clergy.—Religious establishments.—3. *Over the sword.*—Martyrs.—Courage of her priests.—Pio VI.—Soon everything revives. Pio VII.

BENEFITS OF THE CHURCH.

XX. Truth.—1st Benefit of the Church.

1. *Sacred knowledge.*—State of Paganism and of the whole world. —Errors concerning God, concerning man, the world, the past, the future.

2. Christianity recalls all the forgotten truths concerning God, the soul, the world; reveals new, supernatural, and wonderful truths. —By her Popes, her bishops, and her priests, Christianity preserves and propagates these truths in all the world and in every age.

3. *Profane knowledge.*—Sciences, fine arts, literature.—1st Epoch: Age of the Fathers.—Corruption of taste. — They are the greatest geniuses. — Greek and Latin sophists.—2nd Epoch.—The middle ages. — Everything saved by the religious orders.—Charlemagne.—Alcuin.—St. Louis. — Inventions by monks.—3rd Epoch: Modern times: Age of Leo X.; age of Louis XIV.

XXI. Virtue.—2nd Benefit of the Church.

1. *Duties towards God.*—Worship in spirit and in truth.—Adoration. —Above all, love; which the Pagans had not dreamt of: Faith. —Hope.—Prayer.—Sacrifices.

2. *Duties towards our neighbours.* —Justice. — Truth. — Charity.—Love of enemies.—Obedience.

3. *Duties towards ourselves.*—Humility. — Chastity. — Mortification.—Poverty.—To keep up always the fight between what we have been and what Christianity has made us.

XXII. Happiness. — 3rd Benefit of the Church.

1. Union which it has effected between all men.—Neither Grecks nor barbarians, all are brethren.

2. It has raised the dignity of the poor.—Jesus Christ hidden in them. — While with the Pagans poverty was despised.

3. It promises magnificent rewards to those who help the unfortunate. —Let philosophy try it!

Deadly wars, human victims, slavery, abolished. — Hospitals.—Hôtels-Dieu.—Foundlings.—Sisters of Charity.—Mont-St.-Bernard.—Agriculture.—Monasteries, sources of riches and blessing to a country. —S. Vincent de Paul.

XXIII. Characters and Privileges of the Catholic Church.

1. SHE IS ONE, SHE IS HOLY.

1. She is *one.*—The true Church of Jesus Christ *must be one* in her faith, in her sacraments, in her government, and in her head.

Now, the Roman Catholic Church is . . . Therefore . . .

2. She is *Holy.*—The Church of Jesus Christ *must be Holy*, that is to say, the founder must be holy, and the doctrine holy.—Must bring her members to the practice of holiness, should have the light of eminent sanctity, should be made illustrious by the glory of miracles.

Now, the Roman Catholic Church . . . . Therefore the Roman Catholic Church . . .

XXIV. Characters and Privileges of the Catholic Church.

2. SHE IS CATHOLIC, APOSTOLIC.

1. *Catholic.*—The Holy Church of Jesus Christ must be Catholic, that is to say, she must spread everywhere and always.—Now . . . Therefore . . .

2. *Apostolic.*—The Holy Church of Jesus Christ must be Apostolic, that is to say, founded by the Apostles and governed by their successors.—Now . . . Therefore . . .

XXV. Privileges of the Catholic Church.

3. SHE IS INFALLIBLE.

1. *She is infallible.*—The true Church of Jesus Christ must be infallible. — Scripture, common sense, prove it incontestably.—Now, there is only one Church on earth which glories in being infallible. This is the Catholic Church.—She does not maintain that every member, nor every priest, nor even every bishop is infallible; but that all the bishops in the world, all assembled in Council, with the Sovereign Pontiff at their head, are guided infallibly by God in the definition of dogmatic and moral truths. Protestants, on the contrary, rest on a contrary foundation.—Every one is free to form his own belief. . . . Therefore . . . .

2. *She is Roman.*—The true Church of Jesus Christ must be Roman, that is to say, she must have for her head the Bishop of Rome, successor of Peter. The express words of Jesus, the Holy Scriptures, the consent of all the Fathers, the tradition of 18 centuries prove it beyond question.

TEACHING OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

MYSTERIES IN GENERAL.

XXVI. The Holy Trinity.

1. Mysteries in general.—Possible. — Necessary. — Credible. — Useful to the mind, which they enlighten and humble, to the heart, which they touch.

2. The Holy Trinity.—In what consists this mystery?—Its proofs. —Great lessons which flow from it.

XXVII. The Incarnation.

1. Jesus Christ is *God.*

2. Jesus Christ is *man.*—Man like ourselves, soul, body.

3. What is the result in Jesus Christ of the union of Divinity and humanity in His Person?—Two Natures.—Two wills.—One Person alone.

4. Mary, mother of God.—Jesus Christ, our Brother.

XXVIII. The Incarnation.

BEAUTY OF THIS MYSTERY.

1. This mystery is above reason, not against it.—Show and explain rapidly the apparent contradictions; that a God can be born, that the Holy Virgin should be Mother of her Creator, &c.

2. *Is reason enlightened by faith compelled to adore this mystery?*

Yes, because it is a marvel of infinite strength, wisdom, and goodness. . . .

1. *It tends greatly to the glory of God.*—Jesus Christ incarnate becomes the High Priest of nature, the only and universal Priest, and He offers to the Eternal the homage of every creature, having purified, elevated, deified it.

2. In adopting human nature He elevates it; He humbles and abases pride; He comforts sorrows by suffering them; He supports

weakness by hopes and consolations; and thus He procures for men glory, virtue, and happiness.

XXIX. Redemption.

1. In what consists this mystery?

2. Reasons for this mystery.—Man had become the slave of the devil; it was necessary to buy him back, and pay the infinite debt due to divine justice.—Man incapable of this.—God alone capable.—A God-man was needed.—*His blood.*—Superabundant reparation.—For all men. 3. *Greatness and benefit of this mystery.*—Divinity shines forth in it.—Divine miracle and virtue. — Everything that is grandest.—It enlightens the mind, teaches us what God is; what sin is; what our soul is.—It touches the heart.—The cross has caused more tears to be shed, and at the same time has comforted more sorrows than . . . .

XXX. The Holy Spirit.

1. He is God. — The Holy Fathers.—The authority of the Church.—Definition of the Church against the Macedonians.

2. The works of the Spirit from the beginning of the world.

3. Gifts and fruits of the Spirit.

XXXI. Angels and devils.

1. *Of Angels in general.*—Nature.—Creation.— Number.—Choir of Angels.—Hierarchy.

2. *Evil Angels.*—Who are they?—Story of their rebellion and fall.—There are, then, devils.—The consent of all the world.—The revelation in the Scriptures. The authority of the Church.

3. Good Angels. — Who are they?—What do they do?—They adore God.—They offer our prayers to Him.—They bring us His orders.—They guard us.—Guardian Angels.

XXXII. Man's last things.

1. *Death.*—What is Death?—Why is it?—Do all die?—When shall we die?—How shall we die?—Does the soul die?—Immortality of the soul proved by the wisdom, the goodness, and the justice of God.—By general consent.—By the Scriptures.

2. *Particular judgment.*—Why?—When?—Who will judge?—How?—Concerning what?

3. *General judgment.*—What is it?— When?— Why?— How? — Resurrection of the body.

XXXIII. Man's last things.

1. *Purgatory.*—What is it?—Who goes thither?—What is suffered there?—When will it end?

2. *Hell.* Does it exist?—Reason.—Scripture.—Consent of people in general. . . . But God so good.—Hell eternal.

3. *Heaven.*—In what does it consist?—Fulness of joy.—Eternity.

XXXIV. Communion of Saints.

1. What is the Communion of Saints? 2. Who shares in it?—The Church militant, suffering, triumphant.—3. Who is shut out from it?—To what does it oblige us?

SUPPLEMENTARY INSTRUCTIONS.

FOR THE FIRST YEAR.

Although the plan of the preceding instructions, which is only a simple historical exposition and not a discussion or a controversy, may carry with it the power of exact evidence, still the very nature of the plan hardly admits anything beyond the setting forth the truths, without defending them, or at least

doing more than suggesting some replies to the common objections of unbelief against Religion.

For this reason it seems well to devote three instructions to gathering together all the well-known difficulties which the people, and even the children, are likely to hear, and to refute them.

I. Prejudice against the Jewish religion.

1. Its author: Did Moses ever exist?—Have not his writings been altered?

2. Cannot his miracles be explained by natural causes?

3. Narratives in the books apparently false and absurd, and throughout the Bible. — Refute more in general than in detail, by explaining the principles by which difficulties are solved.

Answers to all this are easy with the help of Abbé Gucnée and "La Bible vengée."

II. Prejudice against the Christian religion.

1. Intolerance. — 2. S. Bartholomew.—Religious wars.—The Inquisition.—3. All the world damned.—4. Greeks, Protestants, Savages, little children dead without baptism.—5. It is best to follow the religion of one's country. —6. Or perhaps the religion of one's father, mother, wife.—7. Respectable man.—That is enough. 8. Impossible to know the true Religion.—9. Good for common people.

III. General refutation of unbelief.

Unbelief is: 1. A crime; 2. Folly; 3. Unhappiness.—See Father Maccarty's Sermons on this subject.

SECOND YEAR.—MORALS.

TEACHING OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

I. Preliminary Instruction. —The Commandments of God in general.

Exordium.—God, having taught us to know the *truth* by the *dogmas* He has revealed to us, teaches us how to practise *virtue* by the *commandments* He has given us: these commandments then are the basis of all which is called *morality*, or rather they are *morality* itself, that is to say, that part of Christian doctrine which *regulates our way of living*, teaches us how *to live well*, that is to say, *to avoid vice*, to *practise virtue*, in one word, *to fulfil* all our *duties* towards *God*, towards our *neighbour*, and towards *ourselves;* and even to go on towards perfection. But before entering into detail concerning these divine commandments *separately*, we will speak to-day of these commandments *in general.*

They are divided into three classes:

1. *Commandments of the Natural Law.*—What is this?—What does it command and forbid?—Known by *Reason;* avenged by *Conscience.* —Unchangeable. Engraved on

Adam's heart; obscured by sin; almost obliterated in the world: Then . . . .

2. *Commandments of the Mosaic Law.*—God chose Himself out a people.—Moses, leader.—Sinai.—Law given; *written.*—What is it?—The Hebrews made wise and happy by it; but not perfect.—The other nations lost: Then . . . .

3. *Commandments of the Gospel Law.* — What is this? — Jesus Christ.—Authority.—The Natural Law and part of the Mosaic Law preserved, but strengthened and perfected. . . . Differences; above all, fear and love.

Conclusion.—All the general commandments which God has ever given to man are clearly then contained in the Commandments of the *Gospel Law:* therefore the Church sets before the faithful the old and eternal Decalogue, the *ten commandments* which are more *specially* called *the Commandments of God;* besides these Commandments, the Church sets before us the *Gospel Law*, showing us, in the *Capital Sins*, what is the *evil* to avoid; and by the *Evangelical Counsels*, the *perfection* to which God would call us to attain.

There are moreover the six Commandments of the Church, settled by the Church in virtue of the power which she has expressly received from Jesus Christ.

Thus the whole *Moral* Law is plainly set forth; the *good* to do, or the *virtue* to practise, the *evil* or the *vice* to avoid; finally, the *perfection* to attain.

THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD.

The *three* first of these Commandments contain all our duties *towards God;* the seven last all our duties *towards our neighbour*, and *towards ourselves.* The duties *towards God* which the *first three* Commandments lay upon us may be arranged under five heads: To *believe* in God; to *hope* in God; to *love* God; to *worship* God, and to *reverence His holy Name.*

The five duties thus laid on us by the three Commandments are fulfilled by four *Virtues: Faith, Hope, Charity*, and *Religion.*

We shall speak in succession of these five duties under the *head* of the *Virtues* by which they are fulfilled, following the *order of the Commandments* which impose them.

FIRST COMMANDMENT.

II. Of Faith, or of the first duty imposed by the 1st Commandment, which is to *believe in God*, to believe God.

1. What is faith?—Definition in detail.

2. Must we have faith?—Reasonable.—Commanded.—Makes us happy.

3. Is it easy to have faith, and why have we not faith?—Pride.—Corruption.—Ignorance.—How we may lose faith.—Way to preserve it.

4. When must we make acts of faith?

III. Of the Faith.—Of the profession of Christianity.

1. Of the *necessity* of professing Christianity.—Duty.—Glory.—Interest.

2. On the *Manner* of professing it.—Actions.—Words.—Silence.—Prudence.

3. *How we sin against the Faith:* Infidelity. — Heresy. — Wilful doubts.—Apostasy.

4. *Of the sign of the Cross.*—As an act and profession of faith.—What is it?—Why make it?—When?

IV. Of Hope, or the second duty imposed by the 1st Commandment, *to hope in God.*

1. What is hope?—What is the difference between it and faith?—Object of hope: Heaven, grace; temporal things so far as they are necessary to life, and a help to attain to Heaven.

2. Must we have hope?—*Reasonable:* God is good and faithful to His promises. *Necessary* to salvation, and commanded. *Useful:* Quiet death. — Temptations. — Easy to conquer trials.—Afflictions softened.

3. Sins against hope:—Despair. —Presumption.

4. When must we make acts of hope?

V. Of Charity, or the third duty imposed by the 1st Commandment, *to love God.*

1. What is it to love God?

2. Is it necessary to love God?—We are only created for that purpose.—God is infinitely loveable.—God is our benefactor: He has created us, He preserves us, He gives us a happy life, supernatural gifts, He has saved us.—God commands us to love Him: Old and New Testament.

3. Is it easy to love God?—Happiness of those who love God.

4. Why do we not love God?—Because we love ourselves too much, because we do not know God, because God is not fleshly and visible, and because we love the creatures, who turn away our affections from Him.

VI. Of Charity.

1. How must we love God?—With all our heart &c. . . that is to say, more than ourselves, more than the vanities of the world, more than our life;—without reserve;—doing all His will. Moreover one may love good and lawful things *with God and for God.*

2. When must we love God?—Always.—Frequent separate Acts.

3. How few men love God truly. —Misery of those who do not love God.

VII. Of Religion, or the fourth duty imposed by the 1st Commandment, *to worship God.*

1. What does the 1st Commandment inculcate with regard to the worship which is due to God?—*To adore.*—What is this? Adoration. Inward. Outward. — *To thank God.* — *To ask for His favours.* — To implore the pardon of our sins. — When is all this to be done? — Morning and Evening prayer.

2. What does the 1st Commandment forbid with regard to the worship which is due to God?—Idolatry: outward, inward. — Impiety. — Superstition. — Sacrilege.

VIII. Of Religion.

The 1st Commandment includes also the *religious veneration* (*Cultc*) due to *Saints* and *holy things.*

1. What are the duties towards the Saints which the 1st Commandment imposes on us? — To *honour* them, to *invoke* them, to *imitate* them. — Proofs from reason. — Authority of the Church. — Is it not a wrong towards God? towards Jesus Christ? — Do they hear us?

2. What duties does the 1st Commandment impose upon us towards *holy things? Relics:* reasonable, profitable devotion. — *Images:* reasonable, useful: authority. — *Crucifix:* what is meant by the adoration of the Cross? — *Churches.—Priests.* — *Sacred vessels* and *ornaments.*

SECOND COMMANDMENT.

IX. Of Religion, or the duty imposed by the 2nd Commandment, to reverence the holy name of God.

1. Of an *oath.* — What is an oath ? — *Is it allowable to take oaths ?* — On what conditions ? — Truth, justice, necessity. Habit of swearing, how blamable.

2. Of a *vow.* — What is a vow ? — *Is it pleasing to God ?* — *Is it allowable* ? — Ought it to be *fulfilled ?*—Vows should be made with great prudence. — Always take counsel.

3. *Of curses and blasphemies.* — What are curses ? — What are blasphemies ? — Blasphemy, how terrible ! — Punished !

THIRD COMMANDMENT.

X. Of Religion, or of the duty to *worship God*, imposed by the 1st Commandment, developed further by the 3rd, and also by the 1st and 2nd Commandment of the Church.

The 1st of God's Commandments orders us to *worship God.*— The 3rd orders us to worship Him on *Sunday.*—The 1st Commandment of the Church orders us to worship Him *also on festival days ;* and the 2nd of the Church prescribes the *chief way* in which we are to worship Him.

1. *Of the institution of Sunday.* —Why has one day been chosen ?—To give man rest, to give him time to think of his soul, and to fulfil his religious duties. — Universal observance.—Why Sabbath?—Why Sunday ?

2. *Of the institution of festivals.* Why are there festivals ? —Festivals of the Jews ?— Passover. — Pentecost.—Trumpets. — Tabernacles.— Christian Festivals ; festivals of our Lord ; of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints ; of obligation ; of devotion.—Concordat. — Festivals suppressed.

XI. Of Religion. —Of keeping Sunday holy.

1. *Works forbidden.*
2. *Works commanded.*
3. *Works advised.*

The parochial High Mass ; Word of God ; Vespers ; *Salut.*

OF THE LAST SEVEN COMMANDMENTS OF GOD.

The 4th, 5th, 7th, 8th, and 10th contain our duties towards our *neighbour.*—These duties are : to *love him ;* to *respect his life, his fortune,* and *his honour,* and *never to deceive him.*

All the duties imposed by these five Commandments are fulfilled by *three virtues* which we owe to our neighbour : *Charity, Justice,* and *Truth.*

Charity *loves,* Justice *respects* life, fortune, and honour ; Truth *never deceives.*

The 6th and 9th of God's Commandments relate to our duties *towards ourselves* as well as *towards our neighbour.*—Among the chief of these duties, is to respect *our bodies* by practising the *virtue of modesty.*

We are about to speak in succession of *all these duties* under the head of the *virtues* which fulfil them ; following the *order of the Commandments* which impose them.

XII. On Charity (or Love) for our neighbour in general.

1. Are we obliged to love our neighbour ?—*Our nature makes it a duty.*—*We are all* brothers.—*Above all Revelation.*—God.—Jesus Christ. — Announcement of the great duty. — Last Supper. — The Apostles S. Paul, S. Peter.—More than all, S. John. — The first Christians.

2. How must we love our neighbour?—*Sincere love.*—Do for him what we should wish should be done for us.—*Sincere* love is active, zealous, unselfish, patient, gentle.

Pure love.—In its motives.—For God. — Our frivolous, dangerous, bad dispositions.

Universal Love. — All men. — Even our enemies.

XIII. Of love to our neighbour.—Works of Charity.

1. *Spiritual works.* — Instruct the ignorant.—Warn and correct sinners with prudence and gentleness.—Give good advice.—Comfort the afflicted.—Bear with the faults of our neighbour.—Pardon offences. —Pray for the living and dead.

2. *Corporal works.*—Almsgiving; that is to say, feed the hungry.—Clothe the naked.—Exercise hospitality. — Visit the sick; visit those in prison.—Set free captives. —Bury the dead.

FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

XIV. Duties towards our parents.

1. *Love.*—Nature. — Religion.—Gratitude.

2. *Respect.*—Parents, the images of God.—God commands it.—Our first masters and the wisest.—Show this respect by our words and by our actions.—By our good conduct.

3. *Obedience.*—Nature.—The law of God.—Justice.—Our own interest. — Obedience should be prompt, cheerful, extending to everything.

4. *Help in their needs.*—Corporal needs.—Spiritual needs.

XV. Our duties towards temporal superiors.

1. *The head of the State,* and the *ministers of the supreme authority.* —Words of Jesus Christ.—Of S. Paul.—Of S. Peter.

2. *Teachers.—Respect,* veneration due to their office; they take the place of parents.—A disgrace to children and parents if they are wanting in this.—Obedience.—Self-interest requires it.—God Himself orders it.—*Gratitude:* Look at the good they do.—Love.

3. *Masters and Mistresses.* — *Respect.*—They represent God: are your superiors in the order of Providence.—*Fidelity, justice, obedience.* —S. Paul.

4. The *old.* — Reasons. — Holy Scripture.

XVI. Our duty towards our spiritual superiors.

1. The *Church;* 2. The *Supreme Pontiff;* 3. The *Bishops;* 4. The *Curés.*

FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

XVII. Of Murder.

I. *Corporal murder.* — 1. This Commandment forbids us to kill our neighbour, or on private authority to cause him to be killed, even in a duel.—2. To commit suicide. —3. To desire one's own death, or one's neighbour's.—4. To strike our neighbour unjustly.—5. To revile him in words.

II. *Spiritual murder,* or *scandal.* 1. What is *scandal*?—2. How many kinds of scandals (or causes of offence) are there? — Words, — actions, — bad advice. — 3. Is it a great sin? —In relation to *God,*— in relation to our *neighbour,*—in relation to *ourselves.*

SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

XVIII. Of the virtue of Modesty.

1. *The most glorious virtue.*— Scripture. — The Fathers. — The world itself does homage to it, and brands its opposite with contempt. Why?

2. *The happiest virtue.*—By its consequences: 1. No virtue gives us more a taste for heavenly things. —2. No virtue makes a character sweeter, or more agreeable, or more loveable.—The opposite vice tarnishes the heart, spoils the character, stifles the intellect.

3. *The most favoured virtue.*—The sight of God.—The preference of Jesus Christ.—In Heaven to follow the Lamb without spot.

4. *The most fragile virtue.*—To lose it there needs but: 1. One single thought.—2. One single desire.—3. One single word.—4. One single action.

Watch then over your thoughts, your eyes, your ears, all your senses.

XIX. Dangers encountered by the virtue of Modesty.—Bad books.

I. *Books which are simply frivolous.*—1. They cause the loss of precious time.—2. They are fatal to the *mind*, deteriorating it, and giving it a *disgust* for serious reading and useful studies.—3. They are hurtful to the soul, enervating its *virtue*, ruining piety.

II. *Books entirely bad.*—*Indecent books* begin by corrupting the heart, and the heart once corrupted, they cause the loss of all religion.—2. *Impious books* begin by causing the loss of all religion, and religion lost, they corrupt the heart.

XX. Of dangers encountered by the virtue of Modesty.—Dancing.

Dancing is a pleasure *dangerous* to *piety, stifling it;* to *simplicity, exciting it;* to *innocence*, too often *corrupting* it.

Conclusion.—Avoid it as far as you can.—Even absolutely to abstain from it if for us it is specially dangerous.

XXI. Of dangers encountered by the virtue of Modesty.—Theatres.

1. The pieces played there do not serve to correct manners.—There is but one opinion on this head.

2. Virtue and innocence are there exposed to a crowd of dangers, whether in respect to the *pieces*, the *actors*, or the *spectators*.

Conclusion.—*As above.*

SEVENTH AND TENTH COMMANDMENTS.

XXII. Of Justice.

I. *It is forbidden to take the property of another:* 1. By violence.—2. Unawares.—Servants, children with their parents.—3. By deceit. —Shopkeepers.—False weights.—False measures.—4. By usury.—5. By unjust law-suits.—6. By damage.

II. *It is forbidden to keep back the property of another:* 1. As masters not paying wages.—2. Not giving back something left in our charge.—3. Not giving an account of our administration.—4. Not returning things we have found.—5. Not paying our debts.—6. Not restoring what we have stolen.

XXIII. Of Justice.

I. *It is forbidden to desire unjustly the goods of another.*—Words of God.—Explain well when the desire is unjust, and when it is not.

II. *It is forbidden to set one's heart inordinately on riches:*—1. Because the inordinate love of riches is contrary to the spirit of the Gospel.—2. Because it makes salvation more difficult.—Draw conclusions.

XXIV. Of Justice.—Of Evil-speaking.

Among the *possessions of our neighbour* which the 7th Command-

ment forbids us *to take*, and the 10th forbids us to *covet*, *honour* and *reputation* hold the first rank.—*Evil-speaking* and *calumny* attack them.

We will treat now of evil-speaking or slander.

1. *What is evil-speaking?*—When do we commit it?—When do we avoid it?—How many kinds of evil-speaking?

2. *Is evil-speaking a great sin?*—It wounds *Justice*, *Charity*, *Humility.*—*Terrible words of God against evil-speaking.*

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

This commandment forbids *lying*, *false witness*, *calumny*, and *rash judgments.*

XXV. Of Lying.

1. What is it to lie?—2. *How many sorts of lies?*—Pernicious, for amusement, official.—Dissimulation, hypocrisy, excessive flattery.—3. What circumstances might make a lie a mortal sin?—Reasons which should make us avoid lies, even the most trivial.

XXVI. Of Calumny, of False Witness, and of Rash Judgment.

1. *Calumny.*—To impute evil.—To deny good.—To exaggerate any evil.—To imagine bad intentions.—Sin more or less serious according to the greater or less damage it causes to our neighbour either in his honour or in his possessions.—2. *False witness.*—What is this? A terrible crime.—A sin against Truth, Charity, Justice, Religion. 3. *Rash judgments.*—What does this mean? Explain well.—How does it differ from suspicion, or from the reserve which wisdom teaches?—It sins against Justice, Charity.—Sin which is sometimes serious, sometimes slight, according to circumstances.

RECAPITULATION OF THE DUTIES IMPOSED BY THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF GOD, AND THE VIRTUES BY WHICH THEY ARE FULFILLED.

The duties towards God are to *believe*, to *hope*, to *love*, to *worship*, to *reverence His Holy Name.*—The duties towards our neighbour are to *love* him, to *have respect for his life, his goods, his honour*, and *never to deceive him.*—The great duty towards ourselves is to *respect our own bodies.*

The virtues relating to our duties towards God, are: *Faith*, *Hope*, *Charity*, *Religion.*—To duties towards our neighbour: *Love*, *Justice*, *Truth.*—To our duties towards ourselves, *Chastity* and *Temperance.*

OF THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE CHURCH.

The 1st and 2nd Commandments of the Church have been explained already, with the 3rd Commandment of God.

The 3rd and 4th are but the promulgation of the two commands of Jesus Christ Himself in relation to *two of the Sacraments instituted by Him*, that is to say, to Penitence and the Eucharist.

The 5th and 6th explain and define the command given by Jesus Christ to all men *to mortify themselves.*

XXVII. 3rd Commandment of the Church.

1. *This Commandment orders annual confession.*—Command of Jesus Christ.—Lateran Council.—Explanation of the words of the Holy Council.

2. *This Commandment recommends more frequent confession.*—1. It is useful for *sinners*, keeping them from blindness of spirit, and hardness of heart.—2. It is useful for the *righteous*, purifying their

soul, increasing their fervour, morally, and ensuring perseverance. And there are many persons to whom it is even necessary, particularly young people.

XXVIII. 4th Commandment of the Church.

1. *This Commandment orders annual communion.*—Command of Jesus Christ.—Custom of the Church.—Lateran Council.

2. *This Commandment advises frequent communion.*—1. Desire of our Lord.—2. Custom of the first Christians.—3. Exhortations and complaints of the Holy Fathers.—4. Our needs.

3. How often should it be?—With what dispositions?

XXIX. 5th and 6th Commandments of the Church.

1. In what consists the fasting and the abstinence ordered by the 5th and 6th Commandments of the Church?—2. What were the motives of the Church in enjoining on us fasting and abstinence?—3. Who are those who are obliged to observe the fasting and abstinence commanded by the Church?—4. Idle excuses too often alleged for dispensing ourselves.

XXX. Of the Obedience due to the Commandments of the Church.

1. *Are we bound to obey the Commands of the Church?*—The Church must have received, and in fact has received, from Jesus Christ the power to give us Commandments.—Then:

2. *Is it very wrong to disobey the Commands of the Church?*—Rebellious subject.—Ungrateful child.—It is to disobey Jesus Christ.—To violate the most important Commands of God.

3. *How must we obey?*—In all things.—In all places.—At all times.—With the heart.

XXXI. Of Sin in general, *and the Capital Sins in particular.*

XXXII. Of Sin in general.

1. *What is Sin?*—2. *How many kinds of sins are there?—Original.—Actual.* — *Mortal.* — *Venial.*—Nature and effects of each.—Capital sins.—By *capital* it is not meant that they are always mortal: mortal or venial according to the case. But *capital* sins mean that they are the sources of many other sins.—3. *In how many ways can we sin?*—Thoughts. —Desires.—Words.—Actions.—Omissions. — Frailty. — Malice.—Habit.—Details and examples.

XXXIII. Of the Causes of Sin in general.

1. *Temptations.*—What are these?—External and inward causes.—Why God permits them.—*Remedies:* watchfulness, prayer, mortification.—2. *Bad habits.*—What does this mean?—How fatal, and how earnestly we ought to avoid contracting them. — Remedies: Prayer, daily watchfulness.—Examinations.—3. *Dangerous occasions.*—To fly from them and be on our guard.—4. *Ignorance.*—What is it?—Invincible. — Culpable. — Get rid of it.—Avoid scrupulosity, and do not confound it with a delicate conscience.

XXXIV. Of Capital Sins—Of Pride.—Its Nature.

1. *What is pride?* — 1. It is pride, when we esteem ourselves for qualities which we do not possess, or which we possess, but which we exaggerate; when we glory

even in better qualities, instead of glorifying God for them.—2. When we refer everything to ourselves and not to God.—3. When we despise others in consequence of an inordinate esteem for ourselves.

2. *Why is pride a capital sin?*—Source of vices: Vanity.—Ostentation.—Ambition.—Presumption.—Hypocrisy.—Contempt of our neighbour.

XXXV. Of Pride.—*Greatness of this sin.*

1. *It is detested by God.*—Terrible words of Scripture, chastisement of proud nations.—Of Jesus Christ.—Severity towards the Pharisees.—Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican.—Ancient philosophers of whom S. Paul speaks.

2. *Why so detested by God?* It is detestable because it is *unjust* in principle, and *impious* in its effect.

3. *Detested by men.*—No one can endure the proud. One tries to humble them.

XXXVI. Of the Remedy for Pride—of Humility.

1. What is humility?—2. Is humility a virtue very pleasing to God and to men?—How rare it is, or at any rate how imperfect.—3. How can we acquire humility?—Reflect on our low condition.—Contemplate Jesus Christ.

XXXVII. Avarice and Greediness.

1. *Avarice.*—In what does it consist?—Folly.—Unhappiness.—Explain here what is praiseworthy or permitted in the desire of acquiring and taking care of worldly goods.—This point is of extreme importance in practice, and is very seldom made clear.

Virtues opposed to avarice.—Unselfishness, liberality, almsgiving.—In what consists poverty of spirit?

2. *Greediness.*—What is it?—How do we sin by greediness?—Greediness, a serious or slight sin as the case may be.—Of sobriety.—Pious practices for hallowing our meals, and keeping a guard on ourselves, &c.

XXXVIII. Envy and Anger.

1.—*Envy.*—1. What is envy?—2. What sort of persons are liable to be envious?—3. What are the remedies against envy?

2. *Anger.*—1. What are the effects of anger?—Takes away our reason.—Disturbs us.—Makes us ridiculous. 2. What are the remedies?—Avoid the occasions.—Keep silence.—Ask pardon.—Pray.

XXXIX. Sloth.

1. *What is sloth?*—Bodily.—Spiritual.—How it affects us as regards society, ourselves, and God.

2. *What are the consequences of sloth?*—Forgetfulness of God.—Idleness.—Softness.—Want of energy, and hardening.

3. *Sloth is hateful to God and to men.*

4. What are the remedies?

EVANGELICAL COUNSELS.

XL. Of the Evangelical Counsels.—Perfection.

1. In certain places in the Gospel our Lord counsels a degree of perfection, but it is not a precept.—Reason for this.

2. What are the evangelical counsels?—*Voluntary poverty.*—*Celibacy.*—*Religious obedience.*

3. Have they been practised?—Life of the first Christians.—Solitaries.—Now still.

XLI. Of the Presence of God as a means of Perfection.

1. *In what consists the exercise of the presence of God?*

2. *What are the advantages to be gained by the thought of the presence of God?*—1. It gives us the fear of sin.—2. It gives us strength to conquer temptation.—3. It leads us on to all virtues.

3. *Means which help towards it.*—Frequent acts.—Internal solitude.—External objects which remind us of God.

XLII. Of true and solid Piety.

This recapitulatory instruction brings into one point of view all the preceding instructions.

1. *In relation to God.*—To suffer for Him.—Willingly to die that we may be united to Him.—Willingly to think of Him, and surrender ourselves to Him with confidence.

2. *In relation to our neighbour.*—No imprudent or offensive zeal.—No carnal imprudence.—No sharpness or bitterness.—Charity and friendship without caprice.

3. *In relation to ourselves.*—To keep ourselves low, to humble ourselves, to mortify ourselves, to do and to suffer.

XLIII. Of the Happiness promised to Virtues and to Christian Perfection.

Develop and explain thoroughly the eight Beatitudes.

XLIV. Of Vocation.

1. Necessity of knowing and following our vocation.—2. Means of knowing and following our vocation.

THIRD YEAR.—GRACE.—SACRAMENTS.

I. Of Grace.—Its Nature.

1. What is the nature of grace?—Exact definition, clearly and completely developed.—2. How many sorts of grace are there?—Actual, habitual, inward, outward.—Many examples, familiar comparisons and images borrowed from the Divine writings.

II. Of Grace.—Its Necessity.—Its Efficacy.

1. What is the necessity of grace?—Was grace necessary to man in his innocence?—Is it necessary to fallen man for his conversion?—Is it necessary to the righteous for good works and for perseverance?

2. What is the efficacy of grace?—Is it easy to save ourselves with its help?—Can it save us if we do not desire it?

III. Of Grace.—Co-operation of Man with Grace.

1. Can we resist grace?—2. Is it dangerous to resist grace?—3. How can we co-operate with it?—In three ways: By setting our mind to attend to its light; by submitting our heart to its inspirations; with faithful courage regulating the whole of our life and each one of our actions according to this light and these inspirations.

Example of S. Paul and S. Augustine.

IV. Of Grace.

1. *The price of grace.*—Who has merited it for us?—Who has bought it for us?—What has been paid for it?—The blood of Jesus Christ.—A Divine price.—This is why we must so greatly fear to abuse grace.

2. *Abundant produce of grace.*—Every single grace may be the germ of an immeasurable supply of grace.—Comparison of a grain of corn, which, *well cultivated*, multiplies itself, and may in the end fill a large country with innumerable fields of corn.—The Saints.—The holy Virgin.

V. Of Prayer.—A great means for obtaining Grace.

1. Nature and necessity of prayer.—2. Excellence and efficacy of prayer.

VI. Of Prayer.

1. Qualities of prayer.—Sweetness of prayer.—When and how must we pray?

VII. Of the Sacraments in general.

1. What is a Sacrament?—Exact definition, clearly and fully developed.—Many examples and familiar comparisons.—Difference between the Sacraments of the new law and those of the old law.—2. Excellence of the Sacraments of the new law considered in their nature and in their effects.—Who has the power to institute Sacraments?—3. Why did Jesus Christ institute Sacraments?—4. Why did He institute seven?—Divine wisdom and goodness.

VIII. Of the Sacraments in general.

1. Who has the power to administer the Sacraments of the new law?—2. With what dispositions must we receive the Sacraments?—3. These dispositions are pointed out to us and excited in us by the ceremonies accompanying the administration of the Sacraments.

IX. Of the Sacraments in general.—Of their Excellence.

1. Excellence of the Sacraments considered in their nature and in their effects.—2. Excellence of the Sacraments shown to us visibly by the holy ceremonies belonging to them.

X. Of Baptism.

1. What is baptism?—2. Is baptism absolutely necessary to our salvation?—Not to delay the baptism of infants.—3. How is baptism administered?—Every one may administer it, in case of necessity.—What are the ceremonies of public baptism?

XI. Of Baptism.

1. Evils from which baptism delivers us.—2. Benefits which baptism procures for us.

XII. Of Baptism.—Of the Obligations it imposes.

1. On those who are baptized.—2. On the godfathers and godmothers.

XIII. Of the Sacrament of Penitence.—Of the Virtue of Penitence.

1. Nature of this virtue—2. Necessity of this virtue.—3. Essential qualities of this virtue.

XIV. Of the Sacrament of Penitence.

1. What is the Sacrament of penitence?—2. What is its neces-

sity?—Why has God instituted it? —Wisdom, goodness, justice.

XV. Of Contrition.

1. What is contrition?— 2. Necessity of contrition.—3. Essential qualities of contrition.—4. Motives for contrition.—Good resolution.—Its necessity.—Qualities it should have.

XVI. Of Contrition.

1. Of perfect contrition: Nature, effects.—2. Of imperfect contrition: Nature, effects.—3. What is the difference between these two contritions, and which is necessary for the Sacrament of penitence?

XVII. Of Confession.—Proofs of its Divine Institution.

1. Drawn from the Holy Scriptures.—2. Drawn from tradition.

XVIII. Of Confession.—Proofs of its Divine Institution.

1. Proof from long usage.—2. Special force of the witness of the Greek Church and of all the Oriental sects.— 3. Confession could never have been established and perpetuated if it had not been of Divine institution.

XIX. Of Confession. — Benefit of Confession.

1. It provides pardon and consolation to sinful and penitent souls. —2. It secures for all, counsels, wise direction.—3. A preservative, a support.—4. It corresponds to a need in the guilty soul.

XX. Of Confession. — Mercy of God at the tribunal of Penitence.

1. The judge.—2. Form of procedure.—3. The sentence.—4. The penances which are there inflicted, everything proclaims the mercy of God.

XXI. Of Confession. — Qualities of Confession.

It must be: 1. Humble.—2. Complete and perfectly sincere.— 3. Simple.

XXII. Of Absolution.

1 What is absolution?—2. Who has the power to give it?—3. What effects does it produce?—4. To whom can it be granted?—5. With what feelings must we receive it?

XXIII. Of Satisfaction.

1. What is satisfaction?—2. Is it necessary?—3. What are the ways of making satisfaction to God?

XXIV. Of Indulgences.

1. What are indulgences? Their value.—2. Two different kinds of indulgences. — 3. In particular those of the Jubilee.—4. Conditions for giving indulgences.

XXV. Of the Eucharist.— Real Presence proved by Holy Scripture.

1. Words of the promise. — 2. Words of institution.—3. Words of S. Paul.

XXVI. Of the Eucharist. —Real Presence proved by Tradition.

1. Testimony of the Fathers.—2. Argument from antiquity.

XXVII. Of the Eucharist. —The Real Presence.

1. The Catholic Church bears witness to the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, by the worship of adoration which she there enjoins. — 2. The Christian bears witness to the real presence of Jesus Christ by the virtues with which he is inspired by the reception of the Holy Eucharist.

XXVIII. Of the Eucharist. —Gifts of our Lord in the Eucharist.

1. Our Lord immolates Himself for us.—In it He nourishes us with His sacred Body and with His precious Blood.—2. In it He continues all the mysteries of His hidden life, of His public life, of His suffering and His glorious life.

XXIX. Of the Eucharist. —Of Holy Communion.

1. Of the Easter communion.—Its obligation.—2. Of sacrilegious communion : sin and misery.

XXX. Of the Eucharist.— Of Communion.

1. Of frequent communion.—How profitable, and on what conditions.—Dangers of a lukewarm communion.

XXXI. Of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

1. Processions of the Blessed Sacrament.—2. Visits to the Blessed Sacrament. — Other practices of devotion ; holy Mass, visits, processions ; care of the altars ; sacred vessels ; lamp.

XXXII. Of Confirmation.

1. What is confirmation ?—2. What are its effects, gifts, and fruits of the Holy Spirit ? — 3. What obligations does it lay on us ?

XXXIII. Of Extreme-Unction.

1. What is extreme-unction ?—2. What are the benefits of extreme-unction ?—Give notice to the priest when you know any one is ill.

XXXIV. Of Extreme-Unction.

1. When are we to receive the Sacrament of extreme-unction ?—Danger of delaying it ; death comes unawares.—The earlier the priest is summoned, the better he can prepare the sick man.—2. What are the dispositions with which we should receive extreme-unction ?—3. Ceremonies used by the Church in the administration of extreme-unction.

XXXV. Of the Sacrament of Marriage.

1. What is the Sacrament of marriage ?—2. What are the ceremonies and the prayers with which the Church administers the Sacrament of marriage ?

FOURTH YEAR.—OF SACRIFICE.

I. Preliminary Instruction.

1. Subject of the course of instruction. Sacrifice: 1. Action of sacrifice.—2. Ceremonies of sacrifice.—3. Prayers which accompany the sacrifice.

2. Importance of this course of instruction.—It is the whole of Religion: Dogma, morals, worship. Sacrifice is the very foundation of Christianity.

II. Of Sacrifice.—General and preliminary Ideas.

1. Of sacrifice in general.—2. Of an inward and invisible sacrifice.—3. Of outward and visible sacrifice.

III. Of Sacrifice strictly speaking.

1. What is sacrifice strictly so called?—2. What is the necessity of sacrifice?—3. What is the excellence of sacrifice?—The four great ends of religion.

IV. Of ancient Sacrifices.

1. Pagan sacrifices. — Pomp of their ceremonies.—Different kinds of sacrifices.—Shameful and cruel things there perpetrated.—Human sacrifices.

2. Jewish sacrifices.—Pomp of the ceremonies.—Different kinds of sacrifices: the Tabernacle, the Temple.—Blood everywhere.—No human sacrifices.

V. Of the Jewish Sacrifices.

1. Uselessness of the Jewish sacrifices as to any effect, proved by all the passages of Scripture and by reason itself.—2. Value of the Jewish sacrifices in their object.—They represented the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.—They had their share in the virtue of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

VI. Of the Sacrifice of the Cross.

1. Prophecies which foretold the Sacrifice of the Cross.—In particular David, Isaiah.—2. Fulfilment of prophecy in the Sacrifice of the Cross.

VII. Of the Sacrifice of the Cross.—The Victim.

1. Jesus Christ voluntarily put Himself in the place of the guilty.—2. Jesus Christ will be a victim with blood.—3. Jesus Christ will be a victim capable of expiating the sin of the world.

VIII. Of the Sacrifice of the Cross.—The Priest, Jesus Christ.

1. He is a Priest of wholly Divine greatness: greater than Moses, than Aaron, than the Angels, than all the old Prophets.—2. He is a Divinely merciful Priest.—Mercy chose Him and sent Him.—Mercy devoted Him and consecrated Him.

IX. Of the Sacrifice of the Cross.—The Altar.

1. Why a Cross? A humiliating and grievous altar, and prophesied.—2. What happened on this Cross?—3. What are we to conclude from it?

X. Of the Sacrifice of the Cross : Its Effects.

1. It renders glory to God.—2. It gives back grace and Heaven to man.

XI. Of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

1. Our Lord, next to the Sacrifice of the Cross, instituted the sacrifice of the Mass.—1. To establish in His Church an outward and visible sacrifice of religion.— 2. To preserve amongst men till the end of the world the Sacrament of His passion and His death.—3. To apply to us the virtue and the merits of the Sacrifice of the Cross.

2. Is the Mass truly a sacrifice ? Yes, for there is a priest, a victim, an altar.

XII. Of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

1. Is the holy sacrifice of the Mass the same as the Sacrifice of the Cross ?—Same victim, He who sacrifices, the same.—Then, from the beginning of the world till now, and from now even to Eternity, there is, there has been, and there will be but one Only Sacrifice, unique, unlimited, universal, unchangeable, embracing all time ; figured, accomplished, perpetuated.

2. What is the difference between the sacrifice of the Mass and the Sacrifice of the Cross ?

XIII. Of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

1. To whom is the holy sacrifice of the Mass offered ?—Is it offered to the Saints ?—2. By whom is it offered ?—By Jesus Christ. By the priest.—By the Church.—By those who are present.—3. For whom is it offered ?—For the living and for the dead.—4. For what end is it offered ?—To accomplish the four great duties of religion.

XIV. Excellence and Greatness of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

1. It is an entirely Divine action. —2. It is an all-powerful action.— 3. It is in some sense an infinite action.

XV. Of the Ceremonies of the Holy Sacrifice.

Of the ceremonies of the holy sacrifice.

1. Antiquity of outward worship.—Pagans, Jews.— Christians. —2. Necessity of outward worship. —3. Usefulness and comfort of outward worship.

XVI. Of the Ceremonies of the Holy Sacrifice.

1. Antiquity of Christian Churches. — 2. Description of Christian Churches. — 3. Excellence of Christian Churches.

XVII. Of the Ceremonies of the Holy Sacrifice.

1. Of *altars in general.*—Antiquity of altars. — Material employed in their construction. —Their form.—Places which are assigned to them in churches.—Consecrated with benedictions.

2. Of ornaments.—Of altars.— The Cross.—Candelabra.—Lighted candles.—The angels of the altar. —The flowers.—The Tabernacle.— The sanctuary lamp.

XVIII. Of the Ceremonies of the Holy Sacrifice.

1. *Of the sacerdotal vestments.*— Priestly garments. — Pontifical ornaments. — Ornaments of the other ministers of the sacrifice.

2. Sacred *linen* and sacred *vessels.*

XIX. Of the Ceremonies of the Holy Sacrifice.

1. On what days and at what hour can the holy Mass be celebrated?—2. In what language does the Church celebrate the holy Mass and the holy offices?—3. Whence arises the variety of ceremonies in different countries?—4. What is the meaning of certain expressions frequently employed at the holy Mass: *Oremus, Dominus vobiscum, Amen, Alleluia, &c.*—(Consult Bossuet.)

XX. Dispositions in which we should assist at the Holy Mass.

1. Disposition of adoration.—2. Disposition of thanksgiving.—3. Disposition of petition.—4. Disposition of contrition and good resolution.

XXI. Special methods for joining well in the Holy Mass.

1. *First method:*—To follow the priest in all his prayers and all his actions, and to unite oneself with him by common prayer and actions. —*Second method.*—To follow out the Passion and its various circumstances in the various actions of the priest and the various ceremonies of the sacrifice.

Recommend the faithful to bring their book to the Mass to help them to follow it better.

XXII. The Order of the different Prayers and Ceremonies of the Holy Mass, and Explanations.

From the beginning of the Mass to the Credo.

XXIII. Continuation of the preceding Instruction.

From the Credo *to the* Sanctus.

XXIV. Continuation of the preceding Instruction.

From the Sanctus *to the end.*

XXV. Of Orders.

1. What is meant by orders?—2. What is the excellence of this Sacrament?—3. Different orders.

XXVI. Of Orders.

1. Benefit of the priesthood to the society, to the family, to the poor, to children, to sinners, to the afflicted, to the dying.—2. Duties of the faithful towards the priests.

XXVII. Of Orders.

Explanation of the principal and most beautiful *ceremonies of ordination*, including the *Consecration* of *Bishops*, the *pontifical* in hand.

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The ministry of catechising.
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